JOHN BRIGHT
A MONOGRAPH

R. BARRY O'BRIEN

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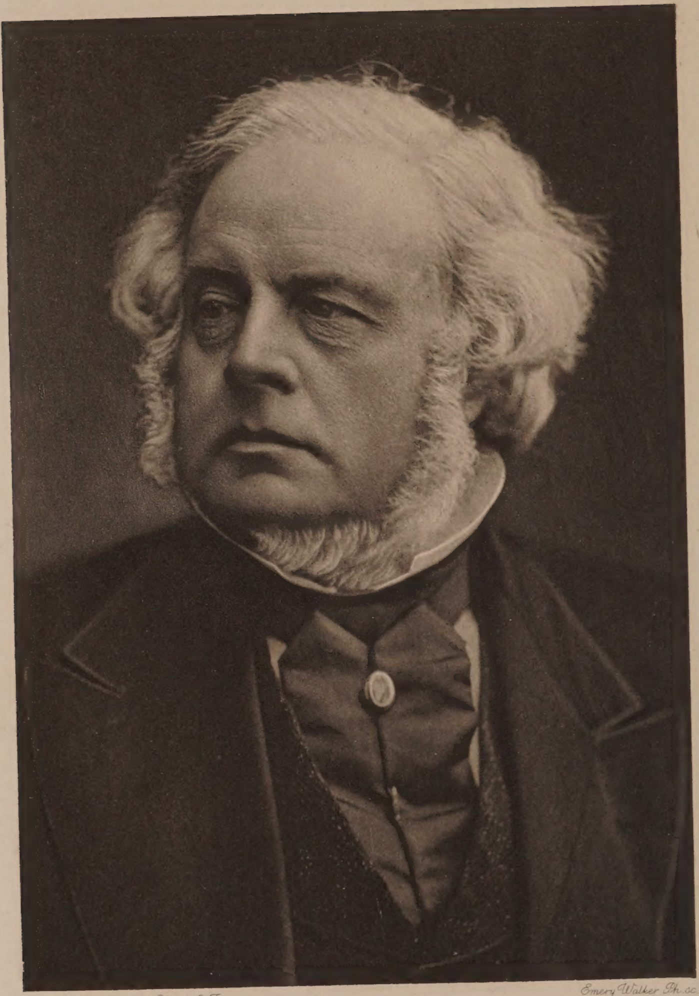
JOHN BRIGHT



From a photograph by Elliott & Fry

Emery Walker Ph. sc.

John Bright

JOHN BRIGHT

A MONOGRAPH

BY

R. BARRY O'BRIEN

AUTHOR OF 'THE LIFE OF CHARLES STEWART PARNELL'
'THE LIFE OF LORD RUSSELL OF KILLOWEN' ETC.

WITH A PREFACE
BY
THE RIGHT HON. AUGUSTINE BIRRELL, M.P.

WITH PORTRAITS AND FACSIMILES

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

I WISH to express my acknowledgments to John Bright's daughters, Mrs. Clark and Mrs. Bernard Roth, and to his son, Mr. John Albert Bright, for the kindness and courtesy which they have shown me in the preparation of this book. Nor must I omit the expression of my warm thanks to Mr. Birrell for his notable offering of friendship in the composition of a preface for which I alone shall not be his debtor. Mr. William Leatham Bright, who also was good enough to interest himself in my work, has recently passed away; and I desire respectfully to tender sympathy to his family in their bereavement.

Since I was a boy, I have felt the greatest admiration for the public life of John Bright, and I have endeavoured, however imperfectly, in these pages (written at the request of my friend and publisher Mr. Reginald Smith) to portray his character, and to do justice to his memory.

R. BARRY O'BRIEN.

October 1, 1910.

PREFACE

My friend Mr. Barry O'Brien, having composed the following sketch of the public life of John Bright, asked me, for the love I bear him, to prefix a Preface, which I consented to do, although entertaining what I am convinced is a well-grounded objection to the introduction of extraneous matter into the work of another man's hand. But we are seldom free agents, particularly in later life. In one of Bright's speeches, made immediately after his reluctant acceptance of office, there occurs the following moving passage:

> It was a dream that I had in my youth—I suppose it must have originated in the thraldom of my school-days—that as I advanced in life I should find myself more at liberty and less under the control of circumstances or of the opinion of others. I find that was altogether a dream, and that the longer I live the less I seem to be my own master. I find myself from year to year becoming more of what I may term almost a bond-slave, and my masters becoming from year to year more numerous and more exacting. The proof of all this is that I am here to-day, and in a new character—one which I had never expected to

assume, and one which I have assumed with extreme reluctance.[1]

This quotation may well serve a double purpose—as an apology for this Preface and (which is really important) as a useful peep-hole into the essential solitariness of Bright's character; for he, like Milton, was a non-gregarious man, who, however much he believed himself to be married to the masses, always preferred to dwell apart.

As is naturally to be looked for in any book of my friend's, the Irish point of view predominates; but no one can fairly say, in this instance at all events, that it is an undue predominance, for both the Irish and Ireland figure largely in Bright's speeches (and his life was in his speeches), and give colour to much of his political criticism. Above everything else John Bright was a critic—I need not add, a most unsparing critic—of the politics and the politicians of his own time; and to anyone so minded, Ireland is a subject always at hand.

It was said of Bright, who like all critics was himself criticised, that he hated 'the governing classes,' who in their turn, being prompted thereto both by the order of their minds and from a sense of harsh and unsympathetic treatment at his mouth, returned the compliment. For the greater part of Bright's life he was a much hated man, brutally caricatured, coarsely abused. It is strange in these days, already so far remote from Bright's, whilst turning over the pages of his three volumes of Speeches and

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[1] *Public Addresses*, 1879, p. 156.

Addresses, to reflect that for a long time, and in the minds of many, their author appeared to be the very type of the dangerous demagogue who set class against class, and went about spreading dissension throughout a well-ordered community. Yet so it was.

In this matter of abuse Mr. Bright does not appear to have been very sensitive. His was a self-possessed, self-contained figure, with a positive genius for scorning his enemies. You could see it in his mouth, which seemed fashioned to express contempt. He had not the faintest desire to enter into what is called Society. Like the Shunammite woman of old, whom by a famous quotation he first introduced to the notice of fashionable folk, he was content to dwell among his own people, and not too many even of them. This perfectly genuine attitude of mind—the true Quaker's—proved most irritating. That odd personage Sir William Fraser, who sat in Parliament with Bright, has left on record how he smarted under the lash of Bright's scornful countenance. Cobden, Sir William rather liked, thinking that there was discernible in him some faint glimmer of a recognition of the native superiority of the Knight of Morar, but John Bright's case was hopeless. He not only called the Tories fools, but too evidently believed that fools they really were, and Fraser among the number.

Instincts like Fraser's may usually be trusted; and it would certainly appear as if Bright did find great and constant happiness in the reflexion, in which he often indulged, that whilst the Tories were always wrong, he was invariably right.

'Our disasters, which are by no means infrequent, are always followed at no distant period by a corresponding triumph; whereas with our Tory friends a disaster is generally final and irreversible. Their policy and their principles, when once overthrown by the advancing intelligence of the people, are buried, and they hope for no resurrection.'

'The end we seek is not only desirable in the ordinary use of that term, but it is, as we believe, good in the highest degree; and whether we look backwards or forwards, to the past or to the future, I think we have attendant upon us constantly a sense of continual progress. Our friends the Tories unhappily are in a very different position.'

'Only imagine, and if you can imagine it will excite your commiseration, how these men have been misled from time to time, how they have been alarmed, how they have striven as if for life against the very things that were most calculated to do them good, how they have spent time and money in fighting contested elections to lose which would be the greatest possible advantage to them and to the country.'

'I must say I feel a great commiseration for the Tory Party, for it seems to me that their political life must be one unvarying cup of sorrow and disappointment.'[1]

These cheerful aphorisms, all culled from one speech made in Rochdale during Christmas week, 1867, are eminently characteristic of Mr. Bright's frame of mind. Regarded as final meditations among the tombs of the Tories, they may be too much in one strain to satisfy the critical sense of succeeding generations; but let no Tory of the present day affect to put them lightly on one side until he has made himself acquainted with the political career of that Lord Derby who, in 1834, left the Whigs because he would not enquire into or interfere with the revenues of the Irish Established Church; who, in 1846, deserted Sir Robert Peel when corn was to be made cheap in the face of famine; and who, in 1867, was the harlequin who hauled down the Tory flag, and let in upon us the waters of household suffrage.

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[1] *Public Addresses*, pp. 40, 41, 42.

Mr. Bright may have fiddled too continuously on one string, but it was a strong string and, in his hands, made martial music.

It seems now generally admitted that Bright was the greatest orator of his time in England, both in the House of Commons and out of it. Though not profound or subtle, he was a clear thinker, and had full command of his mother-tongue; his English was noble, his sentences short, his independence obvious, his voice melodious and commanding, and whilst on occasions he had a biting wit, he had at all times, as already mentioned, an infinite capacity for the expression of scorn.

He stood before his audience like a tower:

> Foursquare to all the winds that blew.

He always looked exactly the same mixture of strength and simplicity. When speaking on the platform he came straight up to the edge, never hiding behind a desk. He once said to a speaker who showed a desire to conceal himself, at least partially, behind a row of flower-pots—'No man can move an audience that does not see his boots.' You saw Bright from head to heel, and every syllable as it fell from his lips reached your ear. I heard him several times on the platform but never in the House. I wish it had been otherwise, for the truest test of oratory is a divided audience.

I remember hearing Bright in 1868 address a huge gathering of Welshmen in Liverpool. We knew the Welsh very well in Liverpool in those days, and were delighted to think they were to be praised by so accomplished an orator; but one or two of us, belonging no doubt to other and more disagreeable nationalities, found ourselves, once or twice, on the verge of the wish that somewhere in the course of his speech he could have found it just possible to 'hint a fault.'

One passage of this speech lives in a memory, undimmed by the passage of forty-two years, as a prodigious triumph. The whole speech is to be found in the 'Public Addresses,' but so far as this particular passage is concerned I will pit my forty-two years' old memory against Mr. Thorold Rogers' reprint. Bright said:

> I was lately at Dolgelly when her Majesty's representatives, the Judges of Assize, came round in style, pomp, and circumstance. The High Sheriff was there with his carriages and horses, and the Judges, of course, were there, with their retinue and cooks. On Sunday they all went to church; not to the church of the people. But, gentlemen, there was only one prisoner—and he was a tramp—come from England.

The effect was, as I have said, prodigious. The Welsh audience seemed, like a great cat, to rise to its feet, to arch a mighty back, and to purr forth an infinite self-satisfaction. Just then it must have been that the dissatisfied aliens fell to grumbling.

Bright in the House of Commons, full of its Frasers; the mouth-piece of a detested minority; pleading for peace in time of war; expressing the unpalatable in words not to be denied; ridiculing the statesmanship of the favourites of the hour; scornfully critical, yet with passages bringing tears to the eyes; and all this in plain yet noble English, without any trick of manner or foppery of discourse—if Bright on the platform was often great, Bright in the House of Commons was frequently sublime.

The main subjects of Bright's speeches were Ireland, India, Free Trade, the Crimean War, Reform of Parliament, and Public Expenditure. Great themes indeed! Of each we must sorrowfully add, for strife is wearisome, *sed finis, nondum est!*

To Disraeli and to Bright, that ill-matched but splendid pair, belong the credit of an early insight into the Irish problem so long denied to their most famous contemporary, Gladstone. The Novelist and the Quaker enjoyed the great advantages of an irregular education and most leisurely occupations. It was not so much that they had time to think, for neither was ever, I suppose, a great thinker, as that they were free, from the beginning, to think for themselves, unhampered by authority or routine. Mr. Gladstone, on the other hand, seemed born in blinkers, and was early entangled in the great political machine, where for long he sat

> Eyeless at Gaza
> At the mill with slaves.

But when ‘ our great Deliverer ’ did begin to think for himself, it was he who first reduced into action Disraeli’s inspired words about an alien Church and an absentee aristocracy.

Ireland’s alien Church looms large in Bright’s speeches, for he hated establishments with a pure and unencumbered hatred. He had no rival system of theology, he smarted under no social ostracism, for if he ever wanted to play croquet he could do so on many a smooth Quaker lawn, but he hated establishments in their essential *quiddity*. In his opinion, they secularised the things of God without imparting even a tinge of true religion to the affairs of State. They did Cæsar no good, and Caiaphas great harm.

He was very fond of pursuing a course of reflexion, for doing which I was once reproved in print by the Archbishop of Canterbury. Here is an example of it, taken from the very same speech I heard Bright address to the Welshmen in Liverpool forty-two years ago:

> For the last two hundred years, up to the end of the great war with France, this country was almost constantly engaged in war. I never knew the archbishops and bishops of the Church of England meet to promote peace and condemn war. When the great question of slavery agitated the country, though there were some of them that gave their support to the right side on that question, there was no combined and unanimous movement in regard to it. When twenty-five or thirty years ago we met, probably in this very building, to denounce one of the greatest iniquities that ever assumed the form of law—the Corn Law—the archbishops and bishops never for

> one moment deemed it their duty to express an opinion upon the question or, so far as we know, to give it five minutes' examination. I have never known them in England or Ireland, in the most calamitous days of our modern history—I have never known them come forward in any combined manner to expose the sufferings and denounce the wrongs which were practised upon their poorer countrymen.[1]

What was true in 1868 may very well have ceased to be equally true in 1910; but one may safely say that wherever and whenever there was an Established Church, Mr. Bright would have cried aloud, 'Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?' and he would certainly have found in the respect now universally entertained throughout Catholic Ireland for the Disestablished Episcopal Protestant Church and in her prosperity additional arguments to prove that as usual he was right and the Tories wrong.

It may well be that Bright exaggerated what would be the result of Disestablishment in Ireland:

> The whole condition of Ireland would be changed, for ancient grievances would be redressed; their strife would cease and justice would have become in Ireland a guiding principle of the Imperial Parliament. I believe that we should soon begin to have, and should ultimately have, a united nation and a loyal people.[2]

No one, however, will now deny that the disestablishment of Disraeli's 'alien Church' was a fine bit of work.

Bright saw with at least equal clearness of vision that there was a Land Question in Ireland as well as a Church Question. The 'absentee aristocracy' had to be dealt with in the same bold spirit as the 'alien Church.' Bright was a land purchase man in every bone of his body. He was no fonder of 'the State' than he was of 'the governing classes.' Collectivism would have inspired nothing but dislike in his breast. He was, it is well to repeat it, a solitary man who liked best to be left alone. To march to heaven in a joyful company, singing part-songs as they went along, was not his notion of the comforts of religion. And so with the land in Ireland, his idea was that all the 'strong farmers' should be turned into owners as quickly as possible. He did not see, perhaps he would have refused to see, the extent of the problem, particularly in the West—the land-hunger of the landless man, the uneconomic holding, the difficulties of migration, the contest between grazing and tillage, the necessity for co-operation and for the provision of stock and instruction in agriculture—but what he did see he saw plainly, and so became the great precursor of land purchase in Ireland.

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[1] *Public Addresses*, p. 77.

[2] *Public Addresses*, p. 81.

In Disraeli's famous utterance—the most remarkable, Mr. Gladstone used to say, that he had ever heard in Parliament—there was, in addition to a starving people, an alien Church, and an absentee aristocracy, a fourth element of the Irish problem—the weakest Executive in the world.

On this point Mr. Bright was not sympathetic towards the Irish demands. Like every true-born Englishman, he was encased in an unfeeling armour towards mere historical claims to separate treatment. Given an extended franchise, the ballot, free speech, and a free Press, what more can anybody want? The Union was, he admitted, 'a fraudful thing,' but it all happened before the great Reform Bill. Mr. Barry O'Brien deals very clearly and candidly with this matter, and I need say no more about it in this place.

To India Mr. Bright probably devoted more study and application than to any other subject. He felt strongly about it. He never was in favour of giving India up.

> But people may say then, 'Perhaps you will give up India,' and I should say 'No,' but I think it is worth while to become a little more rational about it. No; I do not propose to give up India; all I propose is that we should try to make the best of it and not the worst of it, and shake off the childish terror by which we have been possessed.[1]

Mr. Bright's Indian speeches made him many enemies in the ranks of our Civil servants at work in those regions. He had a disagreeable way of talking about them and about their favourite health resort of Simla. Exiles do not like having slights put upon them by 'stay-at-homes.' It was all part of Bright's general attitude towards the governing classes. It was a great pity, for he said a good many things about India that well deserved attention. It was a capital thought of Mr. O'Brien's to prevail upon Sir Alfred Lyall to put in writing what he thinks of some of Mr. Bright's suggestions; for suggestions he did make, as Mr. O'Brien is at the pains to point out, for the better government of India—the heaviest task surely that was ever imposed by the course of events upon a Western democracy. Taking up the 'Law List' for the year in the Library of the House of Commons the other day, I noticed that now the commonest names of the members of the English Bar, called by our ancient Inns of Court, and sharing the honour with Smith and Brown and Jones, are Kahn and Singh and Sen. Even a 'Law List' may make us think.

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[1] *Public Addresses*, pp. 502, 503.

About the great battle for the repeal of the Corn Law Mr. O'Brien has, of course, much to say. It was a genuine thought-movement, and with one of the most persuasive speakers England ever produced, Richard Cobden, at its head, its educational effects were far greater and more permanent than is usually the case in our political controversies. Mr. Bright's admiration and affection for Cobden are all the pleasanter to notice because he was not by nature a man much addicted to admiration. Everyone should read Bright's address when unveiling Cobden's statue at Bradford in July 1877. (See 'Public Addresses,' p. 355.) It is one of the great pieces of English speech.

The Crimean War was also the subject of one of Bright's most famous speeches. Mr. O'Brien naturally quotes from it.

The first Lord Lytton composed a well-known couplet:

> Let Bright responsible for England be,
> And straight in Bright a Chatham we should see.

I have often wondered whether this was sound criticism. That Bright genuinely hated war is certain. He was one of the few civilians who really do so. Yet he was a very positive man, and positive men in power, with thunderbolts in their hands, are not to be trusted to keep the peace in all circumstances. With Bright in a Chatham's place we should not have had Palmerston's wars: we might have had Bright's wars. But we should not have had the Crimean War. Mr. O'Brien has thought fit, *renovare dolorem*, to tell over again the melancholy tale how, in Lord Salisbury's phrase, 'We put our money on the wrong horse.' Such a verdict, when we think of the quarter of a million of lives and the millions of the tax-payers' money involved in it, makes the blood run cold, and is a complete vindication of every word Bright uttered during these horrible years. But Mr. Gladstone remained impenitent to the end.

The struggle between the Southern States of America and the Federalists, the most stupendous event of the last century, brought out another aspect of Bright's character. Here was a war which, at all events, was not the product of the stupidity of the old governing classes, or of any stale notions about the balance of power; a war that was not fed and fostered by professional soldiers out of work, in search of peerages and pensions, but a war of moral grandeur and significance which, after a prodigious loss of life and treasure, was to end, not in the temporary closing of an inland sea, but in finally ridding the world of a crime against humanity, and in the welding together of a confederation of States which was—so it was Bright's supreme happiness to believe—destined to show the universe how a Republic could exist 'without a great army, and without a great navy, not mixing itself up with the entanglements of European politics, without a Custom-house inside, throughout the whole length and breadth of its territory, and with freedom everywhere, equality everywhere, law everywhere, peace everywhere.'

Such a confederation, Mr. Bright declared, 'would afford at least some hope that man is not forsaken of Heaven.'

The race of man, a poet of our own day has reminded us, has been long fed on boundless hopes, and it would be both foolish and unkind to linger here a single moment to dissect a dream. The United States of America, though not yet Utopia, nor travelling along the route Bright prospected for them, are still united; and for half a century now last past their newspapers have contained no advertisements for the sale of men, women, and children, 'either together or in lots,' and have proffered no rewards for the recovery of runaway slaves, 'easily recognisable by the scars on their backs.'

It was characteristic of Bright's impersonal and impatient politics that he never could be got even to sympathise with the hold 'State rights' had over men's minds, as against 'Federal rights.' General Lee hated slavery no less than Bright, but he was a Virginian.

Bright's speech at the breakfast given in London to Mr. Lloyd Garrison in June 1867 is perhaps the most beautiful speech ever made in the English tongue on a public occasion. It was just like Bright to be able to speak as well immediately after breakfast as at any other period of the day.

During the greater part of the last century Parliamentary Reform was the great school for oratory. We can now survey the records with a discriminating eye. Grey, Russell, Macaulay, Bright, Disraeli, Gladstone, and Lowe stand out in bold relief. There is much matter in the speeches of these remarkable men on this subject—a great deal of English history and much of English character. Bright's speeches and Lowe's are, I think, the most pleasant still to read. It is almost certain that Lowe hated the coming democracy more than Bright loved it, and this lends to the fiery philippics of the former a note of personal fear and dislike somewhat unusual in our cold-blooded politics. The encounters between these two men on this subject are amongst the most amusing in Hansard.

Bright on Public Expenditure is always worth reading. He knew the House of Commons well, both what it can do and what it cannot. Tories can hardly be expected to care greatly for Bright. He would not expect it of them. A moment ago, whilst searching for a reference in the Index of one of his three volumes, I came across this—

'Lying, enormous, of Tories, 255.'

Nobody can be always lying; and even a Tory, when not so occupied, will admit that, knowing as Bright did a great deal about the House of Commons, he knew that, as a critic of the Estimates, it is, under the present system, of no use whatever. Hear him for a moment on this grave and living subject:

> You often hear complaints that members do not examine and criticise the Estimates. I have read

> newspapers which make a great point of finding fault with me. They are fond of saying: ‘Why does he not, instead of declaiming against the expenditure in the Birmingham Town Hall, attend the Committees of the House and fight the Estimates?’ The man who tells you that is either a knave or a fool. Mr. Hume fought the Estimates for forty years and they always grew, even in his hands, and the fighting cannot be done in the House of Commons under the present system. So conscious is nearly everyone of this, that at present in Committees of the House scarcely anybody attends to listen or to criticise, except the representatives of the army and navy, and their criticism almost always goes in favour of increasing rather than of diminishing the expenditure. But we should not accept what the Horse Guards say, or what the Admiralty says, or *what the Cabinet says*, but we ought to have an honestly chosen Committee of the House of Commons to whom these matters should be referred, and that Committee should recommend whatever charges it thinks proper after taking evidence upon every point. I am of opinion that the time is coming when the people of England will discover that this question is of very grave importance.[1]

This is a more valuable quotation to make at the present time than any of Bright’s frequent jeremiads over the ever increasing expenditure of the country. The figures that shocked him in 1868—£26,000,000 a year on the sea and land forces—appear to us, now that they have grown to £70,000,000 (which in 1868 was the total expenditure on all accounts), almost impossibly small. The truth is, we have got to accustom ourselves to bigger and bigger figures, for whatever may hereafter be saved on armaments will all be swallowed up by a ravenous social programme. All the more important, therefore, is it to discover some method whereby so gigantic and so dangerous an expenditure may be criticised and controlled by the representatives of the tax-payers.

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[1] *Public Addresses*, p. 196.

Mr. O'Brien, though his talks with Bright are interesting and characteristic, is not able to add much to our scanty *personalia*. Indeed, in one particular, he must be pronounced what Carlyle used to call 'a frightful *minus* quantity,' for he goes some way to destroy one of the few traditions that exist as to the habits of the great Tribune.

Forty years ago all good Radicals believed that their favourite orator was also a famous angler—not in the lake of darkness, though many half-pay colonels would have found no difficulty in believing that, but in the lochs and rivers of the United Kingdom. Salmon was said to be his noble quarry. Outwardly, there can be no doubt, Bright pursued this avocation. I myself once saw him at Taynuilt, marching down to the Awe, rod in hand, a sober yet (apparently) an effective figure. We all love the incongruous, and here, firmly imbedded in the Bright tradition, was the very note we love. Mr. O'Brien now comes along and quotes one of Mr. Bright's hosts in Scotland, where the great man was supposed to come 'for the fishing!'

> He [Bright] was very fond of fishing, but he knew nothing about it. He could never be persuaded to hold the rod properly. He used always to hold it straight out as a coachman holds a whip. *He scarcely*

ever caught anything. But he enjoyed himself, standing on the bank of a river or sitting in a boat, waiting calmly. He liked solitude.

Disraeli used to carry a pocket Æschylus about with him wherever he went, yet according to his admirer, Sir William Fraser, he could hardly read a line of Greek; and now we hear of Bright carrying a salmon-rod about with him yet, according to this authority, not knowing how to hold it. We shall be told next that Mr. Gladstone never really cut down a tree.

I, for one, am not disposed to give up the fishing tradition without a struggle. Some people have absurdly high standards. Among the many beautiful passages to be found in the writings of masters of English prose about their schools and schoolmasters, I have long treasured in my memory, as one of the pleasantest and most sincere, a description given by Bright of the last school he ever attended:

> I was at school in this town [Rochdale] when I was a very small boy. After leaving this town I was at no less than four of what were called very respectable and sufficient boarding schools in that day, but I never heard anything there, to my present recollection, about science, and very little about art. The last school I was at was the one with regard to which I have most pleasant recollections, for it was situated in a very nice valley and by the side of a very pleasant river; and studies were not forced upon us with undue harshness, but we spent a good deal of time in birds'-nesting and *fishing in the river Hodder, chiefly for trout,* and frequently during the summer months in bathing and swimming in one of the pools of that pleasant

stream. I did not get much of what was called education. What I got was something, I had almost said, far better, for I got, I believe, whatever store of good health I have had from that time to this.[1]

I believe in those Hodder trout. Perhaps it was only salmon Bright could never catch.

The angling fraternity, some of whom have lately displayed almost as much activity with the pen as with the rod, might easily do worse than examine this matter with a little care.

Whether John Bright was a real fisherman, or a lover of solitude who sought it, rod in hand, by the banks of pleasant streams, he was a great Englishman whose speeches and addresses will be read, so long as the English language lasts, for edification, for amusement, and for reproof.

A. B.

August 12, 1910.

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[1] *Public Addresses*, p. 410.

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JOHN BRIGHT

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

Why should I write a monograph on John Bright? What is there in common between the English Puritan statesman and an Irish Catholic Nationalist? Had a stranger entered my father's house in the West of Ireland forty years ago, the first object which would have met his eye was a bust of John Bright. Why was it there? Because alone among leading English statesmen, at that time, Bright fearlessly identified himself with the Irish popular cause. His speeches were a revelation to me. They breathed, one might almost say, a spirit of revolt against English injustice in Ireland, and defiantly demanded that the wrongs of the people should be redressed. In 1866 he spoke at a banquet in Dublin given, in his honour, by the Irish popular party. His speech produced a great impression, and many passages in it have often been quoted since. Only twelve months had elapsed since the Fenian State trials had taken place; and the Habeas Corpus Act was still suspended. Bright dealt sympathetically, courageously, with the situation.

His remarks were not much relished in England, but they struck a responsive chord in the hearts of the Irish people. He said:

> It is a country [Ireland] where there has been, for generations past, a general sense of wrong, out of which has grown a state of chronic insurrection; and at this very moment when I speak, the general safeguard of constitutional liberty is withdrawn, and we meet in this hall, and I speak here to-night, rather by the forbearance and permission of the Irish executive than under the protection of the common safeguards of the rights and liberties of the people of the United Kingdom.
>
> I venture to say that this is a miserable and a humiliating picture to draw of this country. Bear in mind that I am not speaking of Poland suffering under the conquest of Russia. . . . I am not speaking about Hungary, or of Venice as she was under the rule of Austria, or of the Greeks under the dominion of the Turk, but I am speaking of Ireland—part of the United Kingdom—part of that which boasts itself to be the most civilised and the most Christian nation in the world.

The following passage has never been forgotten:

> You will recollect that when the ancient Hebrew prophet prayed in his captivity he prayed with his window opened towards Jerusalem. You know that the followers of Mahommed, when they pray, turn their faces towards Mecca. When the Irish peasant asks for food, and freedom, and blessing, his eye follows the setting sun; the aspirations of his heart reach beyond the wide Atlantic, and in spirit he grasps hands with the great Republic of the West.

In 1865 Mr. Gladstone had said that the Irish

Church Question was not within the range of practical politics. This is how Bright dealt with the subject in 1866:

> But some others say that there is no ground of complaint, because the laws and institutions of Ireland are, in the main, the same as the laws and institutions of England and Scotland. They say, for example, that if there be an Established Church in Ireland, there is one in England and one in Scotland, and that Nonconformists are very numerous both in England and in Scotland; but they seem to forget this fact, that the Church in England or the Church in Scotland is not in any sense a foreign Church—that it has not been imposed in past times, and is not maintained by force—that it is not in any degree the symbol of conquest, that it is not the Church of a small minority, absorbing the ecclesiastical revenues and endowments of a whole kingdom; and they omit to remember or to acknowledge that if any Government attempted to plant by force the Episcopal Church in Scotland or the Catholic Church in England, the disorders and discontent which have prevailed in Ireland would be witnessed with tenfold intensity and violence in Great Britain.

On the Land Question, as on the Church Question, he went to the root of the matter. He said:

> And these persons whom I am describing also say that the landlords in Ireland are the same as the landlords in England. It would be easy to show that the landlords in England are bad enough, and that but for the outlet of the population afforded by our extraordinary manufacturing industry, the condition of England would in all probability become quite as bad as the condition of Ireland has been; but

> if the countries differ with regard to land and the management of it in their customs, may it not be reasonable that they should also differ in their laws?
>
> In Ireland the landowner is the creature of conquest,—not of conquest of eight hundred years ago, but of conquest completed only two hundred years ago; and it may be well for us to remember, and for all Englishmen to remember, that succeeding that transfer of the land to the new-comers from Great Britain, there followed a system of laws, known by the name of the Penal Code, of the most ingenious cruelty, and such as, I believe, has never in modern times been inflicted on any Christian people. Unhappily, on this account, the wound which was opened by the conquest has never been permitted to be closed, and thus we have had landowners in Ireland of a different race, of a different religion, and of different ideas from the great bulk of the people, and there has been a constant and bitter war between the owners and occupiers of the soil. . . .
>
> But Ireland has been more than this; it has been a land of evictions—a word which, I suspect, is scarcely known in any other civilised country. It is a country from which thousands of families have been driven by the will of the landowners and the power of the law.

In 1868 the first edition of Bright's Speeches, edited by Professor Thorold Rogers, was published. I read the book with avidity. In fact, it became my constant companion. I first came to London in 1869. The one English celebrity whom I felt most anxious to see was John Bright. At the time the name of Gladstone was in every man's mouth, especially in every Irishman's mouth, for he had come into office in 1868 pledged to disestablish the English Church in Ireland. But he held a secondary place in my thoughts. Bright held the first place, because, living in the midst of a hostile population, he had, for nearly a quarter of a century, fought the Irish cause almost single-handed. Gladstone had only just taken it up, and taken it up under the pressure of a great Irish revolutionary organisation—the Fenian Society. Bright had needed no such pressure to persuade him to demand justice for the Irish people.

On March 23, 1869—the night of the division on the Church Bill—I paid my first visit to the House of Commons. I was taken into the lobby by Sir Coleman O'Loghlen, then member for the County Clare. We stood at the top of the passage leading to the cloak-room and saw the members as they came up to enter the House. Gladstone walked briskly by. 'There is Gladstone,' said O'Loghlen; and the Prime Minister, hearing his name, turned quickly round, waved his hand to O'Loghlen, and then passed into the House, his face beaming with the joyful anticipation of coming victory. I waited for some time longer at the top of the passage leading to the cloak-room in the hope of seeing Bright, but he did not come. I then wandered about the lobby for some hours. At length my chance came, and about 11 or 12 o'clock I got into what was then called the Speaker's Gallery. The House was packed (as the saying is) from floor to ceiling. The galleries were thronged. There seemed to be scarcely standing room. It was an animated and an exciting scene. In front of the despatch-box at the end of the table, on the Speaker's left, a member stood, delivering a rattling speech. Then there were cheers and counter-cheers. 'That 's Gathorne Hardy,' I was told. It did not take me long to discover that he was attacking the Bill. By his side sat one whose remarkable and curious face at once fixed my attention. Indeed, while I listened to Hardy I looked at him. His head rested against the top of the bench, his eyes were closed. He seemed to be asleep. Something attracted his attention ; he woke up, fixed a large eyeglass in his right eye, holding it the while between the thumb and forefinger, looked steadfastly for a second in a particular direction, then removed the glass, leant back on the seat, and apparently fell asleep again. 'That 's Disraeli,' some one said. Opposite to him sat Gladstone, whom of course I quickly recognised again. He seemed to me to be the most restless man I had ever seen. He did not sit still for a minute. At one moment he placed the right foot on the left knee, and then in an instant reversed the position, placing the left foot on the right knee. He put his head back on the seat, not, however, to fall asleep, like his great rival, but to lean forward immediately afterwards to take a note. He spoke to his companion on the right and to his companion on the left. He rested not for an instant, and I expected every moment that he would spring to his feet to interrupt Hardy. But he did not do that. Hardy rattled away, and Gladstone chafed under restraint until his time came. Immediately on the left of Gladstone, so far as I can now recall, was John Bright. His splendid leonine head was, I thought, the noblest object in the House of Commons that night. He was stately and dignified. He sat upright and looked straight in front of him. The lines of the mouth were drawn down, and the expression was earnest, defiant, severe, with a touch of contempt and scorn, when Tory cheers greeted the belligerent periods of the fiery Hardy. During Hardy's speech Bright looked, in the main, unconcerned. Sometimes the arms were folded, sometimes the elbow of the right arm rested in the palm of the left hand and the uplifted fingers stroked the chin. Mr. Gladstone turned to him now and then, but without, so far as I could see, eliciting much response. His attitude was upon the whole decidedly impassive. He had spoken on March 20, and the speech has generally been accounted one of his finest efforts; but I had not the good luck to hear it. I may, however, by way of compensation for this loss, consider myself fortunate in having heard Gladstone's reply to Hardy on this memorable night. When Hardy sat down, Gladstone sprang to his feet, and the cheers which greeted the rising of the Prime Minister mingled with those which applauded the termination of Hardy's oration. Gladstone clutched the sides of the despatch-box with both hands, and so stood, while cheers and counter-cheers rang through the House. Sometimes he stepped back from the despatch-box as if to begin his speech, but then the cheers grew louder than ever, and he resumed his former attitude. At length the cheers died gradually away, and Gladstone began in words, and with voice and gesture, which I shall never forget. Hardy had said hard things of Ireland, and I wished to see this Tory enemy annihilated, but I never dreamt that the work of destruction would be so rapid and complete. In six sentences, Hardy was laid low. So I thought; and so, clearly, the Liberals thought, by the extraordinary burst of cheering which greeted the last of these sentences. The Tories were perturbed and cried—'Oh! Oh!' Hardy looked angry and discomposed. Gladstone began in sonorous tones, accentuating the words 'remarkable and deplorable' with wonderful effect, looking at his own followers below the gangway the while:

> Mr. Speaker—I think, Sir, that both sides of the House must be agreed at least in this—that the right hon. gentleman who has just sat down has drawn a picture of the state of Ireland which is equally *remarkable and deplorable.*

He went on, assuming a narrative tone, and wheeling slightly round so as to face the men on the back benches above the gangway:

> The right hon. gentleman's picture consists of two parts. On the one side he looks at the system of law, government, and institutions in Ireland, and there all is well. On the other hand he looks at the people of Ireland—at the religion of the people of Ireland, at the relations between the people of Ireland and the ministers of their religion—and there, unfortunately, all is ill.

Next with a rapid change of voice, and grave and solemn expression, he continued:

> Mr. Burke said in one of his memorable compositions that he did not know how to bring an indictment against a nation.

Pausing for a moment he wheeled round again, faced the front Tory Bench, struck the despatch-box lightly with his hand, waved the hand towards Hardy, while, with concentrated energy, and in voice which rang through the chamber, he broke forth :

> For bringing an indictment against a nation commend me to the right hon. gentleman.

The Liberals cheered again and again, and the applause lasted for several minutes. Gladstone tried impatiently to get on, but in vain. There he stood at the despatch-box, his face glowing with animation and triumph. The cold page of Hansard can give no idea of the effect of these six sentences delivered in Gladstone's superb style. Indeed, the delivery was half the battle—and the battle went ill for Hardy. At the conclusion of Gladstone's speech the House divided on the second reading, which was carried amid tumultuous applause by a majority of 368 against 250 votes.

After this night I did not see Bright again until about 1876, and I did not meet him to speak to until some years later. In 1880 I published a little pamphlet entitled ' The Irish Land Question and English Public Opinion.' I sent him a copy. He wrote to me in ackowledgment :

One Ash, Rochdale : Jan. 9, 80.

[*Private.*]

Dear Sir,—I thank you for sending me your pamphlet. It is very good, and must be useful wheresoever it is circulated and read.

. . . .

On this question of the Land, the difficulty would not be great. All might be done which is not of a revolutionary character, and the present time seems favourable for such changes as are possible without violence and by consent of the Imperial Parliament.

I shall probably take some early opportunity of discussing the Irish Question, which is in reality the Irish *Land* Question.

I am, yours sincerely,
JOHN BRIGHT.

R. BARRY O'BRIEN, ESQ.,
Temple, London.

In 1880 I wrote a book entitled 'The Parliamentary History of the Irish Land Question.' According to my wont I sent a copy to Bright, who replied :

Reform Club, Pall Mall, S.W. : Nov. 10, 80.

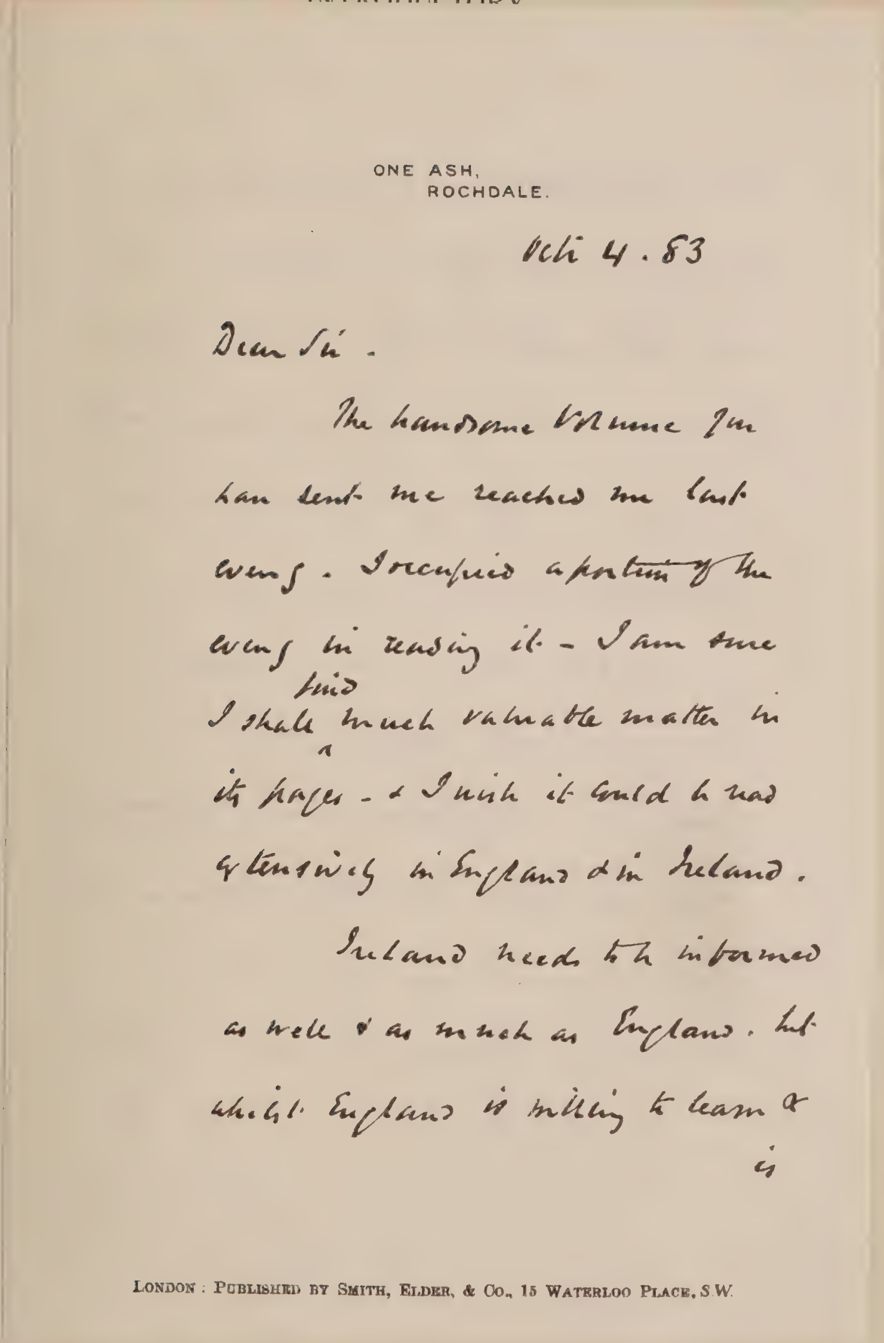
DEAR SIR,—I thank you for the gift of your little book. I have read it through carefully, and have found it very interesting. I wish all the members of Parliament could read it. I mean the members of both Houses.

I am, truly yours,
JOHN BRIGHT.

R. BARRY O'BRIEN, ESQ.,
The Temple.

On November 16, at a great meeting at Birmingham, he said :

> . . . I have been reading within the last week a very interesting little volume written by Mr. Barry O'Brien. I saw in the papers to-day or yesterday that there is a letter published from Mr. Gladstone in which he writes to Mr. O'Brien acknowledging the receipt of his little volume. It is a volume that makes you absolutely miserable to read. Not that there is anything shocking in it—no catastrophe, no assassination, or conspiracies of bloodshed. That is not it. It details what has been done in both Houses of Parliament from the year 1829 to the year 1869, the year before the passing of Mr. Gladstone's Irish Land Act, and for those forty years he gives you an account of the efforts which were made



ONE ASH,
ROCHDALE.

Oct 4. 83

Dear Sir -

The handsome volume you have sent me reached me last evening. I occupied a portion of the evening in reading it - I am sure I shall find much valuable matter in its pages - & I wish it could be read extensively in England & in Ireland.

Ireland needs to be informed as well & as much as England. but whilst England is willing to learn &

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now well disposed. A large portion of Ireland is not willing to learn, & has put itself into the hands of men whose purpose is that it shall only learn what is hostile to England & as I think most injurious to itself.

As to the future, I do not take so gloomy a view as many speakers & writers do. I believe in just measures & in their effect, & in time & patience — & I am ready to hope, & even to believe, that within a reasonable period we shall

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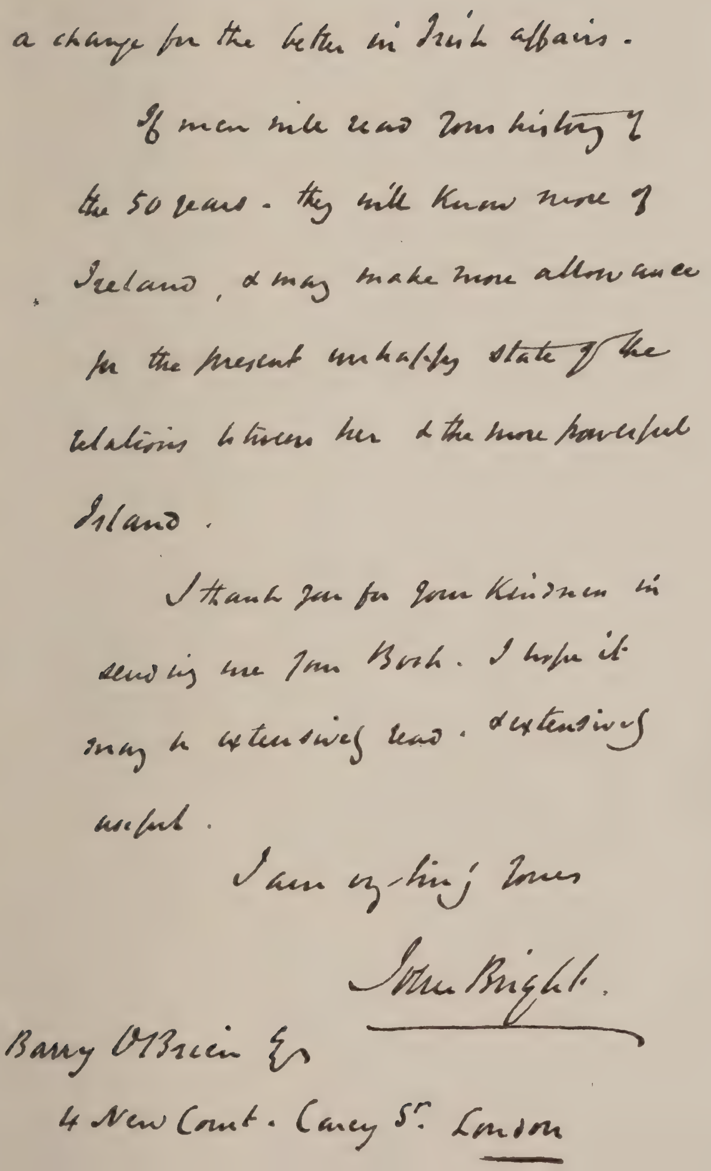

a change for the better in Irish affairs.

If men will read your history of the 50 years – they will know more of Ireland, & may make more allowance for the present unhappy state of the relations between her & the more powerful Island.

I thank you for your kindness in sending me your Book. I hope it may be extensively read & extensively useful.

I am very truly Yours

John Bright.

R. Barry O'Brien Esq
4 New Court. Carey St. London

by some honest men to convince the Parliament of England that some better and wiser legislation should be afforded to meet the intolerable and growing sufferings of Ireland, and he shows how all these appeals to Parliament were constantly rejected.

On the publication of 'Fifty Years of Concessions to Ireland' in 1883, I received the following letter:

One Ash, Rochdale: Oct. 4, 83.

Dear Sir,—The handsome volume you have sent me reached me last evening. I occupied a portion of the evening in reading it. I am sure I shall find much valuable matter in its pages, and I wish it could be read extensively in England and in Ireland.

Ireland needs to be informed as well and as much as England, but whilst England is willing to learn and is now well disposed, a large portion of Ireland is not willing to learn, and has put itself into the hands of men whose purpose is that it shall only learn what is hostile to England and as I think most injurious to itself.

As to the future, I do not take so gloomy a view as many speakers and writers do. I believe in just measures and in their effect, and in time and patience, and I am ready to hope and even to believe that within a reasonable period we shall see a change for the better in Irish affairs.

If men will read your history of the fifty years, they will know more of Ireland, and may make more allowance for the present unhappy state of the relations between her and the more powerful Island.

I thank you for your kindness in sending me your Book. I hope it may be extensively read, and extensively useful.

I am, very truly yours,
John Bright.

R. Barry O'Brien, Esq.,
4 New Court, Carey Street, London.

It was in 1884 that I first met Bright. I wanted to examine some papers at the Record Office, and thought that I would seek his help to obtain the necessary permission from the Secretary of State. I wrote, asking for an appointment. He replied in the affirmative, and one day in March I called on him at his well-known lodgings, 132 Piccadilly. I found him sitting in his dressing-gown at a table in a large room facing the Green Park. There was a book before him—Plowden's 'History of Ireland.' As I entered he rose. I advanced; he touched my hand coldly, and said, 'Sit down.' I drew a chair to the table, and sat beside him and explained my business. He said, 'I do not see why you should not be allowed to see these papers. I think that they should be thrown open to everyone. The people ought to know what is going on.' He added, 'I shall speak to the Home Secretary about you'—a pause—'if I think of it.' I thought this proviso, 'if I think of it,' characteristic. I had always been told that Quakers were very precise in their statements, lest they should say what was not accurate, and very particular in their promises, lest the promises might not be kept. Bright then, placing his hand on the book, said:

> They say I have lost all interest in Ireland since I voted for coercion, as they call it; still, I have been reading this book all the morning. The history of Ireland has always interested me.

During our conversation Bright showed no bitterness in talking about Irish affairs. On the contrary, he seemed to regret the fact that he was no longer, as in former days, in touch with the Irish popular representatives. He dwelt on the 'violence' of the 'Land League.' I said, 'Nothing has been done for Ireland without violence.' He said, 'Yes; do not suppose that I object to violence. I do not, if it rests on a moral basis.' I said, 'The claims of the Irish tenants rest on a moral basis.' He replied, 'Certainly, but the acts of the League are not moral. If they were, I should subscribe to its funds myself.'

He spoke of the *Irish World*, and said suddenly, 'Why, that fellow Ford sends me his paper every week. Would you like to see a copy of it?'

I said, 'Yes.' He rose, went to a drawer, took out a copy of the *Irish World*, and spread it out over Plowden's 'History of Ireland.'

'There it is,' he said with a smile, 'and I read it regularly.'

I reminded him that he had entered Parliament in 1843, that in that very year the Devon Commission was appointed, that it reported in 1845, that he had read the report and evidence of the Commission, and that he had constantly advocated the cause of land reform in Ireland, but that nothing had been done by Parliament, and that he had spoken to his fellow-countrymen on the Irish Land Question in vain. It was only, I said, under the pressure of the Fenian movement that the Land Act of 1870 was passed, and the State Church disestablished. 'Ah!' he said, suddenly turning to the Church Question with a vehemence which astonished me, as the question had long been a dead issue, 'the Irish State Church was a great scandal. It was the most unjust and scandalous institution ever established in any country.' Then he made a little speech of eight or ten minutes, summing up the case against the Church with as much earnestness and eloquence as if the subject was still under public consideration. ' Well,' he said after some further talk, ' I should like to visit Ireland again ; I should like to make a speech to the Irish people again.' I said, ' Why don't you ? ' He replied, ' They would not listen to me.' I said, ' I think that you are mistaken, they would listen to you. They are a very fair-minded people, and would listen gladly to you. Remember Mr. Forster's speech at Tullamore. They listened to him with great patience, yet he had given them cause not to listen to him.' ' That is quite true,' said Bright ; ' they did give Forster a fair hearing. But I am too old to make speeches now.' Then, apropos of nothing, he said, ' I am dining with Mrs. Drummond to-night —the widow of Thomas Drummond, about whom you speak so well in your book.' This was an agreeable surprise to me, for I had no idea that any members of Drummond's family were alive, and said so. Bright said, ' Yes, his widow and two daughters are living.'

I had heard that Bright was an unapproachable man ; that he was intolerant of differences of opinion, impatient of contradiction and argument ; and that he generally called the people who did not agree with him ' fools.' I must say that my recollection of this my first interview with him is in every way pleasant. He was agreeable and homely, listened to all I had to say and showed a disposition to meet every point fully and fairly. The three most remarkable politicians whom I have met were Parnell, Gladstone, and Bright. If I may, I should describe the conversational characteristics of each thus: Parnell listened and seldom talked, Gladstone talked and seldom listened, Bright talked and listened.

A few days after our interview I received the following letter from him:

132 Piccadilly: March 14, 1884.

Dear Sir,—I was dining on Wednesday with Mrs. Drummond, the widow of Mr. Drummond the Secretary in Dublin of whom you have spoken highly in your book.

If you can call upon Mrs. Drummond, she will be glad to see you. I think a little conversation with you would please her. She is a lady of much intelligence and right principles, and has much sympathy with your country. I spoke to her of your book, and of your desire to be of service to her country and to your own.

Her address is 18 *Hyde Park Gardens*.

Yours very sincerely,
John Bright.

R. Barry O'Brien, Esq.,
4 New Court, Carey Street.

From this time until his death the relations were pleasant between myself and the great English Tribune.

When he fell seriously ill in 1888, I wrote to him expressing my solicitude for his recovery. I received a cordial reply from a member of his family, for he was himself then too ill to write. A few days afterwards he passed away. In the House of Commons, on March 29, 1889, it fell to the lot of Mr. Justin

McCarthy to speak for Ireland in memory of one who, for the best part of his life, had courageously advocated the cause of justice to the Irish people. Mr. McCarthy said:

Any words of mine must come like an anti-climax after the noble eloquence of the right hon. gentleman the member for Mid-Lothian. But my colleagues and I feel that if on this occasion no voice were to be raised from the benches on which we sit, our silence might possibly be misconstrued, or at least be misunderstood. It is at least possible that if we remained silent it might be thought that because of late years we had not Mr. Bright's sympathy and support for our national cause, we were unwilling to associate ourselves in the tribute all other parties are paying to his career and to his memory. Mr. Speaker, the Irish Party is not so wanting in generosity, and the memory of the Irish people is not so short. We regret—we deeply regret—that we had not of late years the unspeakable advantage of Mr. Bright's sympathy and support, but we are not thinking much of that just now—we are not desirous of thinking of it. In our ordinary experience of life we often find that impressions made long ago remain abiding and imperishable, while the events which occurred the day before yesterday are already forgotten. So we feel, so we wish to feel, for the great public and private career of Mr. Bright. Our memory goes back to the time when he championed our Irish cause with an eloquence and a sincerity never surpassed in the struggle for any great purpose whatever. We cannot but remember that he was our champion and our advocate at a time when we had nothing like the amount of sympathy and support, in this House and out of it, which, thanks alike to friends and enemies, we possess to-day. We remember, too—we must remember—that some of the most superb, the most magnificent, illustrations of his immortal eloquence were given to champion the cause of the suffering Irish peasant, and to awaken in this country a sympathy with the Irish cause. Bearing in mind all these things, and others I will not go through, we feel we cannot remain silent on an occasion like the present. Remembering, then, what he did for Ireland in days gone by, and with the full conviction, alluded to by the First Lord of the Treasury, that every one of Mr. Bright's views was conscientious and sincere, we desire to associate ourselves with the tribute paid in this House to his memory, and we claim the right of Ireland to lay her *immortelle*, her mourning wreath, on this great Englishman's grave.

CHAPTER II

EARLY DAYS ; MEMBER FOR DURHAM

READERS of biography are, as a rule, impatient of family history. They like the biographer to come at once to the point. Well, in the case of John Bright they shall be gratified.

The Brights were of Quaker stock. The story is told how, on one occasion, Sydney Smith, while looking critically at the unfinished portrait of a celebrated Nonconformist divine, said to the artist, 'Do you not think that you could throw into the face a stronger expression of hostility to the Established Church ? '

The Brights disliked Established Churches everywhere. An ancestor of Bright, John Gratton, left the Established Church of England and became a Friend, violated the Conventicle Act in the reign of Charles II, and was imprisoned for over five years in Derby gaol. He was released by James II, and lived until 1711. John Bright was very proud of John Gratton, because John Gratton had suffered for the faith that was in him.[1]

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[1] 'I was,' says John Gratton, 'a prisoner for the Gospel's sake, about five years and a half before I was set at liberty by King James II.

The Bright family seem to have come originally from Wiltshire.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century Abraham Bright married Martha Jacobs, and migrated to Coventry, in Warwickshire. Their great-grandson, Jacob Bright, was born at Coventry in 1775. He became the apprentice of a small cotton manufacturer, named William Holmes (whose daughter he ultimately married), at New Mills, Derbyshire.

In 1802 two of Holmes's sons settled in Rochdale, where they established a cotton mill. Jacob Bright accompanied them and became their bookkeeper.

In 1809 Jacob took an old mill and house, called Greenbank, on Cronkeyshaw Common, near Rochdale. A firm of agents found the capital and Jacob managed the business. This partnership lasted until 1823, when he became sole owner of the property. He died in 1851. He was married three times, but had issue only by his second wife, Martha Wood (daughter of a tradesman at Bolton le Moors), who bore him eleven children. John, the second child, who was born at Greenbank in 1811, became the head of the family on the decease of the eldest child, William, who died in 1814.

'I cannot,' said Bright, in the Free Trade Hall, Manchester, October 18, 1847, 'boast of blood and ancestry. My ancestry were people who followed an

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As also many hundreds more were; I was discharged in open court, the 23rd of the first month, 1686.'—John Gratton's Journal.

John Gratton's granddaughter was, I understand, the grandmother of Bright's father.

> honourable industry—such as I myself should have preferred always to follow, such as you follow now, and such as your forefathers followed. My sympathies are naturally with the class with which I am connected, and I would infinitely prefer to raise the class of which I am one, than by any means whatever to creep above it or out of it.'

I hope that this brief and simple narrative of family history will not exhaust the patience even of the most restive reader.

Readers of biography are also, I think, impatient of the story of 'early days.' They think that the biographer tries to make out that his hero was a prodigy from start to finish. Well, as a boy John Bright was no prodigy. He was a handsome, delicate lad, fond of reading, delighting in beautiful scenery, and amusing himself out of doors by walking, fishing, and bird's-nesting. He was sent to Nonconformist schools (where he received a sound English education, but read no classics) at Rochdale, at Ackworth near Pontefract, at York, and at Newton near Clitheroe. At the age of fifteen he left school, entered his father's business, and began the world.

In an unfinished MS. autobiography, Bright makes the following reference to his schooldays at Rochdale:

> It was in the year 1820, when I was nearly nine years old, that I first went to a regular school. This was to Townhead School for boarders and day scholars, which was kept by William Littlewood, then a very young man to have the responsibility of conducting a considerable school. His father had but recently

died, and the son succeeded him. He lived with his mother, Sarah Littlewood, of whom I stood in much awe, for she was a stately lady. My mother had a great regard for her. Townhead School was at the top of Yorkshire Street, in Rochdale, at the distance of half a mile from my home. I walked down after an early breakfast, came home to dinner, and went back to school for the afternoon. I can well remember, as I went out of the back door of our house and round to the front to go out of the little garden gate, my dear mother would often meet me at the front door with a piece of cake for me to eat as I walked down the four or five fields through which I passed before reaching Yorkshire Street. I must have been one of the youngest and smallest boys in the school, and it was on this account probably that I was sometimes sent by the other boys into the parlour to ask for a holiday for myself and for them. The master was popular with the boys, for he was kind and worthy of our good opinion. I remember that he often took his coffee for breakfast at a small table whilst the lessons were going on, and when he had finished it he sometimes told me to carry the small tray into the house, and I was allowed to indulge in the toast which was left on the plate. William Littlewood was not only my first schoolmaster, but he was, whilst he lived, one of my best and kindest friends, and not infrequently, in after years, I have spent pleasant evenings at his house, with his wife and daughters and friends who were visiting him.[1]

The first political event which seems to have attracted the attention of Bright was the Preston election in 1830. The candidates were Lord Stanley

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[1] Quoted in *An Account of Townhead School, Rochdale*, by J. Stothert Littlewood.

(afterwards the great Lord Derby) and 'orator' Hunt. There was a man named Nuttall in the employment of the Messrs. Bright. Nuttall was a politician and a Radical. He took a keen interest in the Preston fight, watched the proceedings day by day, and kept young Bright—whose interest in the contest he aroused—well posted in all that went on. There was great rejoicing in the establishment of the Messrs. Bright when, on the close of the poll, it was found that Hunt was the victor. We have an interesting sketch of Bright in 1832 by Mr. Aldis, a noteworthy Baptist minister. Mr. Aldis attended a meeting of the Bible Society in Rochdale, where young Bright spoke. Mr. Aldis met him for the first time at a friend's house. He says:

> Soon a slender, modest young gentleman came, who surprised me by his intelligence and thoughtfulness. I took his arm on the way to the meeting, and I thought he seemed nervous. I think it was his first public speech, at all events in such connection. It was very eloquent and powerful, and carried away the meeting, but it was elaborate and memorative. On our way back, as I congratulated him, he said that such efforts cost him too dear, and asked me how I spoke so easily. I then took the full advantage of my seniority to set forth my notions, which I need not repeat here, except this—that in his case, as in most, I thought it would be best not to burden the memory too much, but having carefully prepared and committed to memory any portions when special effect was desired, merely to put down other things in the desired order, leaving the wording of them to the moment. Years rolled away. I had entirely forgotten the name of the young friend, when the Free Trade Bazaar was held in London. One

of those engaged for it—Mr. Baker, of Stockport—calling on me, asked if I had called on Mr. Bright. I said I had not been able to attend the meetings, and did not personally know him at all. He replied, 'You must, for I heard him say that you gave him his first lesson in public speaking.' I went to a subsequent meeting and recognised the young friend of 1832.

In 1833 Bright went abroad for the first time, visiting Ostend, Ghent, Brussels, Antwerp, Cologne, Frankfort, and Mayence. In the same year he took a prominent part in founding the Rochdale Literary and Philosophical Society, where he delivered an address on capital punishment, a subject in which he always took a profound interest. It is unnecessary to say that he consistently advocated its abolition. In 1835 the most important event, so far, in Bright's life happened. He met Cobden. He tells us the story himself.

I went over to Manchester to ask him if he would be kind enough to come to Rochdale and to speak at an education meeting which was about to be held in the schoolroom of the Baptist Chapel in West Street of that town. I found him in his office in Mosley Street. I introduced myself to him. I told him what I wanted. His countenance lit up with pleasure to find that there were others who were working on this question, and he, without hesitation, agreed to come. He came, and he spoke; and although he was then so young as a speaker, yet the qualities of his speech were such as remained with him so long as he was able to speak at all—clearness, logic, a conversational eloquence, a persuasiveness which, when conjoined with the absolute truth there was in his eye and in his countenance, it was almost impossible to resist.

In 1836 Bright went abroad again, visiting Lisbon, Gibraltar, Malta, Syria, the Pyrenees, and Athens.

In 1837 there was a great meeting at Rochdale, summoned to condemn Church Establishments. Bright was called on to support the resolution of the day—'That all civil establishments of religion are directly opposed to the spirit of Christianity.' It is interesting to note that at this early period of his public life he was mindful of the anomalous position of the English State Church in Ireland. In the course of his speech he said:

> In unfortunate Ireland there is a Church established by law, countenanced by the Government, and supported by an army of some twenty-five thousand men, wringing its maintenance from an almost starving population, seven-eighths of whom entirely disagree with it in principles and in doctrine. When I hear of the acts of persecution which have taken place in Ireland, I can almost blush that I am one of a nation whose Government and whose Church, established by law, sanction such unholy deeds.

Bright hated Church Rates, as did his father (who had frequently suffered distraint for them) before him. All Rochdale hated Church Rates, and Bright attended many a meeting to denounce them. In 1840 he delivered what was perhaps the best speech he had made up to this date on the subject. This speech was delivered in St. Chad's Churchyard, Rochdale, in the presence of some 6000 people. The peroration has the ring of the true metal, which was soon to characterise Bright's speeches on all subjects. Pointing to the old parish church close by, he said:

> Fellow-townsmen, I look on that old building—that venerable building, for its antiquity gives it a venerable air—with a feeling of pain. I behold it as a witness of ages gone by, as one of the numberless monuments of the piety and zeal of our ancestors, as a connecting-link between this and former ages. I could look on it with a feeling of affection, did I not know that it forms the centre of that source of discord with which our neighbourhood has for years been afflicted, and did it not seem the genial bed wherein strife and bitter jarrings were perpetually produced to spread their baneful influence over this densely peopled parish! I would that that venerable fabric were the representative of a really reformed Church—of a Church separated from the foul connexion with the State—of a Church depending upon her own resources, upon the zeal of her people, upon the truthfulness of her principles and upon the blessings of her spiritual Head! Then would the Church be really free from her old vices; then would she run a career of brighter and still brightening glory; then would she unite heart and hand with her sister Churches in this kingdom, in the great and glorious work of evangelising the people of this great empire, and of every clime throughout the world. My friends, the time is coming when a State Church will be unknown in England, and it rests with you to accelerate or retard that happy consummation. I call upon you to gird yourselves for the contest which is impending, for the hour of conflict is approaching when the people of England will be arbiters of their own fate—when they will have to choose between civil and religious liberty, or the iron hoof, the mental thraldom of a hireling State priesthood. Men of

> Rochdale, do your duty! You know what becomes you! Maintain the great principles you profess to hold dear; unite with me in the firm resolve that under no possible circumstances will you ever pay a Church Rate, and, whatever may await you, prove that good and holy principles can nerve the heart; and ultimately our cause, your cause, the world's cause, shall triumph gloriously.

In 1841 Bright's life was clouded by a great sorrow. He lost his young and devoted wife (Elizabeth Priestman, daughter of Jonathan and Rachel Priestman of Newcastle-on-Tyne), to whom he had been married in 1839. He tells us in pathetic language how Cobden came to comfort him, and what happened between them:

> At that time I was at Leamington, and on the day when Mr. Cobden called on me—for he happened to be there at the same time on a visit to some relations—I was in the depth of grief, I might almost say of despair, for the light and sunshine of my house had been extinguished. All that was left on earth of my young wife, except the memory of a sainted life and of a too brief happiness, was lying still and cold in the chamber above us. Mr. Cobden called on me as my friend, and addressed me, as you might suppose, with words of condolence. After a time he looked up and said, 'There are thousands of homes in England at this moment where wives, mothers, and children are dying of hunger. Now, when the first paroxysm of your grief is past, I would advise you to come with me, and we will never rest until the Corn Law is repealed!'

Two years later, under the pressure of Cobden and the League, he consented to enter Parliament in the cause of Free Trade. There was an election for the city of Durham. Lord Duncannon stood as a Protectionist. Bright opposed him as an independent Liberal and a Free Trader. Duncannon won ; but he was unseated on petition for bribery. There was another election. Mr. Purvis came forward in the Tory and Protectionist interest. Bright stood again. Purvis was beaten, and Bright became member for Durham.

CHAPTER III

THE ANTI-CORN LAW AGITATION

I AM not going to retell the story of the Anti-Corn Law agitation. It is as old as the hills. Everybody knows it. At the end of the Napoleonic wars, import duties were placed on corn. The corn of the foreigner was kept out of England, but the value of the home-grown article was greatly enhanced. Prices went up and rents went up. The landlord and, to a certain extent, the farmer were benefited by the Corn Laws, but the consumer had to pay the piper. 'It is a pantry question,' said Bright. Quite true. The question of the Corn Law was a question of the dear loaf or the cheap loaf. The Corn Law made the loaf dear. It was to remove this tax on the food of the people that John Bright and Richard Cobden took off their coats.[1]

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[1] In 1815 the Corn Law was passed, prohibiting the importation of wheat, except under a heavy duty, until the price of home-grown reached 80*s*. a quarter. In 1822 another Act was passed which permitted the importation of corn when the price of wheat was 70*s*. a quarter. In 1828 a third Act was passed, which provided that a duty of 23*s*. 8*d*. was imposed when the price of wheat in the home market was 64*s*. There were certain variations. Thus, when wheat was at

'This House,' said Bright, 'is a club of landowners legislating for landowners. The corn law you cherish is a law to make a scarcity of food in the country that your own rents may be increased. The quarrel is between the bread-eating millions and the few who monopolise the soil.'

I shall use the Anti-Corn Law agitation as I shall use every other subject—solely for the purpose of illustrating the character of Bright. 'Bright hated the governing classes; that is the key to his character,' so a shrewd observer once said to me. But this statement needs at least to be supplemented by another: Bright loved justice and freedom, and had faith in the people. Who were the governing classes in England when Bright entered public life? Landlords and parsons; and it must be allowed that Bright had not much affection for either. He thought that somehow they represented monopoly and injustice. Bishops, particularly the bishops of an Established Church, were his pet aversion. Speaking at Manchester in 1847, and referring to the recent creation of a bishopric in that district, he said that he regretted that it was not in his power to give a vote in opposition to the 'calamity' which had befallen the town. He went on:

My right hon. colleague [Mr. Gibson] says that he should sleep comfortably if no more bishops had been made; my slumbers would be unbroken

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69*s.* the duty was 16*s.* 8*d.*, and when the home price rose to 73*s.*, then the duty fell to the nominal rate of 1*s.*

[For an account of the Corn Law, and the Anti-Corn Law, agitation generally, see Morley's *Cobden*.]

> if the bishops that are made were to be unmade. I never yet saw any good that the bishops did; I have seen the multitudinous mischiefs that the bishops have done. I believe that hierarchies, State-manufactured clergy, are in themselves evils, and that the time will come when they will be no more known on the face of the earth than some of those great creatures, of which we have remnants left, which lived before the flood.

Speaking on Lord John Russell's ridiculous Ecclesiastical Titles Bill in 1851, he said, and the passage is eminently characteristic:

> The noble lord at the head of the Government said to-night that he was strongly opposed to ecclesiastical influence in temporal affairs. Why, if we walk to the other House, we see twenty-four or twenty-six bishops, and it is a remarkable fact that they always sit behind the Government. When a Minister crosses the House the bishops stay where they are; they always keep on the Government side. One of these bishops, or rather an archbishop, has an income of £15,000 a-year. I heard the noble lord, when this archbishop was appointed, state that an arrangement had been made by which the salary would be brought down from its hitherto unknown and fabulous amount to this £15,000 a-year; and the noble lord said, with a coolness I thought inimitable, that he hoped this would be quite satisfactory. Not only, however, here, but wherever they travel, these bishops and archbishops are surrounded with pomp and power. A bishop was sent lately to Jerusalem; and he did not travel like an ordinary man—he had a steam frigate to himself, called *The Devastation.* And when he arrived within a stone's throw, no doubt, of the house where an apostle lived, in the house of Simon the tanner, he landed under a salute of twenty-one guns.

Bright had faith in the people, and devoted himself to their welfare.

'In countries not far off,' he once said, 'we have seen institutions shaken to their foundation by dire calamities. We have seen crowns and hierarchies shaken to the dust; we have seen ranks and orders and parties overthrown; but there was one party which survived all this, and that party was the people. Whatever convulsion might happen in this country, whatever orders might be overthrown, the people would survive.'

The aristocracy, as an institution, Bright detested and despised. He said:

> Two centuries ago the people of this country were engaged in a fearful conflict with the Crown. A despotic and treacherous monarch assumed to himself the right to levy taxes without the consent of Parliament and the people. That assumption was resisted. This fair island became a battlefield, the kingdom was convulsed, and an ancient throne overturned. And if our forefathers two hundred years ago resisted that attempt—if they refused to be the bondmen of a king—shall we be the born thralls of an aristocracy like ours? Shall we, who struck the lion down, shall we pay the wolf homage? or shall we not, by a manly and united expression of public opinion, at once and for ever put an end to this giant wrong?

He did not even always speak respectfully of the English Constitution itself. He once said:

> An illustrious member of Sir Robert Peel's Government declared, in 1829, that the sole alternative of Catholic emancipation was civil war, and to avert civil war emancipation was granted; surely it was not a wise Constitution which allowed things to grow to

such a pass. The noble lord's Reform Bill was passed in a hurricane of popular feeling, without which it would not have passed at all. The Constitution was helped on by brickbats, the carriages of the noble lords and hon. gentlemen who opposed the measure being smashed over and over again, in many towns and villages of this country ; surely it was not a perfect Constitution that required the fillip of brickbats. Mr. Dickens has a story of a Captain Cuttle, who, in making a boy a present of a very large watch, tells him that if he only puts it on a quarter of an hour every morning at breakfast, and half an hour every day at dinner, it will do him credit ; but whatever the case with Captain Cuttle's watch, the Constitution which needs such vehement jerks to keep it moving is scarcely one of a very creditable description. . . . I can have no respect for a Constitution, or a system of representation or legislation, which requires the menace of civil war ere it will grant Catholic emancipation—which must call in the aid of brickbats to enable it to give the Reform Bill—and which must be driven into the Sale of the Encumbered Estates Bill by the starvation of half a million of the people of Ireland.

The Corn Law was the work of the aristocracy, and Bright denounced the wrong and the wrongdoers with the passionate fervour which always burned in his breast. Cobden was, I suppose, the hero of the Anti-Corn Law agitation ; Bright was the orator—the picturesque figure which lent the charm of eloquence and passion and human magnetism to the movement.

Between 1839 and 1846 the question of the Corn Law continued to occupy public attention. In 1836 an Anti-Corn Law League had been established in London ; in 1838 another was established in

Manchester. Bright and Cobden were of course confronted by the difficulties which have to be encountered by all reformers. The men in authority said *non possumus.* In 1839 the Whig Prime Minister, Lord Melbourne, declared before God that he considered leaving the whole 'agricultural interest without protection the wildest and maddest scheme that had ever entered into the imagination of man.'[1] The Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition in the House of Commons joined hands with Her Majesty's Prime Minister in defending the Corn Law.

In 1840 Sir Robert Peel said that liberal protection to domestic agriculture was indispensable.[2] Mr. Ashworth, in his 'Recollections of Cobden and the League,' gives an account of a characteristic interview between a deputation of Leaguers and Sir James Graham in 1840. Mr. Ashworth says:

> When Mr. John Brooks described the distress in the cotton trade, Sir James retorted that the consumption of cotton was greater than at any previous period, and Mr. Thomas Ashton replied that the dependents were more numerous than at any previous period, and that coarser yarns were being spun. Mr. Brooks proceeded with his address, when Sir James tripped him up again by calling him a Chartist; and Mr. W. Rawson interposed, and told Sir James that Mr. Brooks was not a Chartist, but that he (Mr. Rawson) had no objection to be called by that name. My turn came next, and I exclaimed against the injustice of restricting the imports of food in order to uphold rents, showing that the inevitable effect would be to increase the sense of unfair treatment

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[1] Walpole, *History of England,* vol. iii. p. 530.

[2] Ibid.

which was now felt by the people, and which it behoved every well-wisher of his country not to disregard. At this point Sir James called out, 'Why, you are a leveller,' and in an insolent tone inquired 'whether he was to infer that the labouring classes had some claim to the landlords' estates.' Being somewhat startled, I appealed to my colleagues as to whether anything I had said supported such an idea, when Mr. Thomas Ashton called out, 'Go on, Mr. Ashworth, and never mind what he has said.' Sir James, in reply to the deputation, said that if the Corn Law were repealed, great disasters would fall upon the country, that the land would go out of cultivation, that Church and State could not be upheld, that all our institutions would be reduced to their primitive elements, and that the people we were exciting would pull down our houses about our ears. We responded to the effect that to uphold our institutions we must remove injustice, that we had no fear for our own houses, and that whatever might become of the Established Church, we had no fear for religion.

But let all reformers gather comfort from what followed. In 1842 Lord John Russell, then Leader of the Opposition, and Sir Robert Peel, then Prime Minister, proposed a change in the Corn Law. It is not necessary to enter into details. Suffice it to say that Peel proposed a graduated scale, which it was suggested would be more favourable to the consumer than the existing system, and Russell proposed a fixed duty. To the proposal of the Prime Minister and the proposal of the Leader of the Opposition Bright and Cobden said in effect, 'A plague on both your houses. We shall have neither your graduated scale nor your fixed duty. We want the repeal of the Corn Law root and branch; and for this object we shall fight to the end.' Between 1839 and 1846 much distress prevailed in England, and the agricultural labourer, though protected, fared no better in these crises than the working classes generally. 'I be protected, and I be starving,' an agricultural labourer once said at a meeting of the League. The words made a deep impression upon Bright, and he often quoted them.

'In 1835,' says Sir Spencer Walpole, 'the average price of wheat was only £1 19*s*. 4*d*. the Imperial bushel; it rose to £2 8*s*. 6*d*. in 1836; to £2 15*s*. 10*d*. in 1837; to £3 4*s*. 7*d*. in 1838; to £3 10*s*. 8*d*. in 1839, and it did not again fall below £3 a bushel till after the change of Government in 1841. A quarter of wheat is the average annual consumption of each member of that portion of the population which lives upon bread. A labouring man with a wife and three children would probably require annually five quarters of wheat. To such a man, therefore, a rise of price of 30*s*. a quarter was equivalent to an increased expenditure of £7 10*s*. a year —or, if his wages were £1 a week, to an income tax of 14 per cent.; if his wages were 10*s*. a week, to an income tax of 28 per cent. It need hardly, therefore, be added that the poor suffered as much from the increased price of bread as from the reduced value of their labour. "Child, is thy father dead?" so ran the touching question of the poet of the poor—

Child, is thy father dead?—
  God's will be done.
Mother has sold her bed,
Better to die than wed.
Where shall she lay her head?
  Home she has none.

The expedients to which the poor were reduced for the sake of food almost exceed belief. The author of the "Poor Law Catechism" said that "Pennyworths of mutton and halfpennyworths of bread cut off the loaf are what the shopkeepers of Bolton deal out to the inhabitants of their Jerusalem." "I could tell you," so ran a letter from Johnstone, "of mothers dividing a farthing herring and a halfpennyworth of potatoes among a family of seven." Such expedients seemed tolerable compared with others which were resorted to at the same time. Children fought each other in the streets for the offal which rich men do not allow their dogs to touch. A gentleman saw a labourer standing over his swill tub voraciously devouring the wash intended for the pigs. Twenty women begged a farmer to allow them to disinter the body of a cow, which he had buried thirty-six hours before as unfit for human food. Starving men and women, or, worse still, men and women seeing their children starve before their eyes, readily seized the vilest substances which enabled them to protract for a few hours longer their miserable lives.'[1]

Bright once expressed his astonishment that it should have taken seven years' constant agitation to make Sir Robert Peel and Lord John Russell free traders. We have seen that in 1840 both statesmen were against the repeal of the Corn Law. It is worth while to recall the circumstances under which they became converted to the views of Bright and Cobden. The story will be found in its latest form in the 'Letters of Queen Victoria.' It was the dark cloud on the political horizon, foreboding famine in Ireland, that brought Whig and Tory leaders to their bearings in 1845.

On November 1 of that year Peel called his

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[1] Walpole, *History of England*, vol. iv. p. 26.

Cabinet together. The Prince Consort, in a Memorandum based on the information which Peel gave him, states what happened:

> [Sir Robert Peel placed before his Cabinet] the reports of the Irish Commissioners, Dr. Buckland, Dr. Playfair, and Dr. Lindley, on the condition of the potato crop, which was to the effect that the half of the potatoes were ruined by the rot, and that no one could guarantee the remainder. Belgium, Holland, Sweden, and Denmark, in which States the potato disease had likewise deprived the poorer class of its usual food, have immediately taken energetic means, and have opened the harbours, bought corn, and provided for the case of a rise of prices. Sir Robert proposed the same thing for England, and, by opening the ports, a preparation for the abolition of the Corn Law. His colleagues refused, and of the whole Cabinet only Lord Aberdeen, Sir James Graham, and Mr. Sidney Herbert voted with him. Sir Robert hoped that in time the opinions of the others would change, and therefore postponed a final decision.

Meanwhile Bright and Cobden and the Anti-Corn Law Leaguers redoubled their efforts to rouse public feeling. Intense excitement prevailed everywhere; and, in the midst of it all, the *Times* 'became,' as the Prince Consort said, 'suddenly *violently* Anti-Corn Law.'

Peel called another meeting of his Cabinet (towards the end of November). During their deliberations Lord John Russell addressed a letter[1] to the City of

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[1] Russell's letter was published on November 27.

London declaring himself in favour of the total and immediate abolition of the Corn Law. This letter fell like a thunderbolt on the councils of the Peel Ministry. 'As soon,' says Sir Robert Peel, 'as I saw Lord John's letter I felt that the ground was slipping away from under me, and that whatever I might now propose would appear as dictated by the Opposition, as taking Lord John's measure.'

Peel now urged the necessity of unanimous action by the Cabinet, and pressed his colleagues for a decision. The Prince Consort continues:

> The Duke of Buccleuch and Lord Stanley declared they could not take a part in a measure abolishing the Corn Laws, and would therefore have to resign. The other members, including the Duke of Wellington, showed themselves ready to support Sir Robert, yet, as the latter says, 'apparently not willingly, and against their feelings.' Thereupon Sir Robert resolved to lay down his office as Minister (December 5).[1]

Queen Victoria sent for Lord John Russell, who tried to form an administration but failed, whereupon Sir Robert Peel withdrew his offer of resignation. On December 21 he wrote to the Queen (having previously had an interview with her and the Prince Consort on learning of Lord John Russell's failure):

> Sir Robert Peel presents his humble duty to your Majesty, and proceeds to give your Majesty an account of what has passed since he left your Majesty at four

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[1] *Letters of Queen Victoria*, vol. ii. p. 56.

o'clock yesterday. The Cabinet met at Sir Robert Peel's house in Downing Street at half-past nine. Sir Robert Peel informed them that he had not summoned them for the purpose of deliberating on what was to be done, but for the purpose of announcing to them that he was your Majesty's Minister, and, whether supported or not, was firmly resolved to meet Parliament as your Majesty's Minister, and to propose such measures as the public exigencies required.

Failure or success must depend upon their decision, but nothing could shake Sir Robert Peel's determination to meet Parliament and to advise the Speech from the Throne. There was a dead silence, at length interrupted by Lord Stanley's declaring that he must persevere in resigning, that he thought the Corn Law ought to be adhered to and might have been maintained.

The Duke of Wellington said he thought the Corn Law was a subordinate consideration. He was *delighted* when he received Sir Robert Peel's letter that day, announcing to the Duke that his mind was made up to place his services at your Majesty's disposal.

The Duke of Buccleuch behaved admirably—was much agitated—thought new circumstances had arisen—would not then decide on resigning.

Sir Robert Peel has received this morning the enclosed note from the Duke.

He has written a reply very strongly to the Duke, stating that the present question is not one of Corn Law, but whether your Majesty's former servants or Lord Grey and Mr. Cobden shall constitute your Majesty's Government. Sir Robert Peel defied the wit of man to suggest now another alternative to your Majesty.[1]

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[1] See *Letters of Queen Victoria*, vol. ii.

Greville also gives us a peep behind the scenes during the Ministerial crisis. He says:

> Clarendon received Henry Pierrepoint at the Grove a few days ago, who came from Strathfieldsaye, and his account of the Duke, and of what he said, is not without interest, so I transcribe it from his letter. . . . It is clear that the Duke of Wellington resents the whole of Peel's conduct, that he dislikes him, feels he has never had his whole confidence and has foreseen for the last six months that he was preparing to overthrow the Corn Law. Pierrepoint considers this to be the cause of the unapproachable state of irritation in which he has been during the autumn. The Duke says, 'Rotten potatoes have done it all; they put Peel in his d——d fright'; and both for the cause and the effect he seems to feel equal contempt. When he found that Peel was determined to meddle with the Corn Law, he wrote a long paper against it, but said that he should defer to Peel, and certainly not leave the Government if the majority of the Cabinet were in favour of the measure. He was not, however, sorry to be released by the majority being dissentient. When they all shuffled back to their places by the Queen's command, he looked on himself as one of the rank and file, ordered to *fall in*, and he set about doing his duty and preparing for battle. He has written a great many letters to Tory lords, such as Rutland, Beaufort, Salisbury, Exeter, and has received some very stiff and unsatisfactory answers, particularly from Beaufort, who tells him that when they all sacrificed their opinions on the Catholic Question, they had at the head of the Government a leader on whose honour they relied and whose conscientious motives they could not but respect; but that the case was very different now, when they had for their leader a man who had violated every principle and pledge, and

in whom no party could put any trust! I have little doubt that Alvanley, who has long been laid up at Badminton, dictated this letter, for he is very violent, and says 'Peel ought not to die a natural death.'

There has been a curious scene with Melbourne at Windsor, which was told me by Jocelyn, who was present. It was at dinner, when Melbourne was sitting next to the Queen. Some allusion was made to passing events and to the expected measure, when Melbourne suddenly broke out, 'Ma'am, it is a damned dishonest act.' The Queen laughed, and tried to quiet him, but he repeated, 'I say again, it is a very dishonest act,' and then he continued a tirade against the abolition of the Corn Law, the people not knowing how to look, and the Queen only laughing. The Court is very strong in favour of Free Trade, and not less in favour of Peel.[1]

Peel finally resumed office.[2] On the meeting of Parliament on February 22, 1846, he immediately took up the question of the Corn Law, and before the end of the Session a measure for its repeal was placed on the statute book. A sliding scale was adopted for three years, and at the end of that time the Law was to disappear altogether. Amid the torrent of abuse which was poured on Peel for 'betraying his party,' Bright's panegyric must have come as balm in Gilead to the harassed Minister. Indeed, we are told that the tears rolled down his cheeks as the great Liberal orator in glowing language vindicated his policy and his character. Bright said :

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[1] Greville, vol. ii. p. 351.

[2] The Duke of Buccleuch withdrew his resignation, but Stanley retired from the Ministry.

You say the right hon. baronet is a traitor. It would ill become me to attempt his defence after the speech which he delivered last night—a speech, I will venture to say, more powerful and more to be admired than any speech which has been delivered within the memory of any man in this House. I watched the right hon. baronet as he went home last night, and for the first time I envied him his feelings. That speech has circulated by scores of thousands throughout the kingdom and throughout the world ; and wherever a man is to be found who loves justice, and wherever there is a labourer whom you have trampled under foot, that speech will bring joy to the heart of the one and hope to the breast of the other. You chose the right hon. baronet—why ? Because he was the ablest man of your party. You always said so, and you will not deny it now. Why was he the ablest ? Because he had great experience, profound attainments, and an honest regard for the good of the country. You placed him in office. When a man is in office he is not the same man as when in opposition. The present generation or posterity does not deal as mildly with men in Government as with those in Opposition. There are such things as the responsibilities of office. Look at the population of Lancashire and Yorkshire, and there is not a man among you who would have the valour to take office and raise the standard of Protection and cry, 'Down with the Anti-Corn Law League, and Protection for ever ! ' There is not a man in your ranks who would dare to sit on that bench as the Prime Minister of England pledged to maintain the existing law. The right hon. baronet took the only, the truest, course — he resigned. He told you by that act, 'I will no longer do your work ; I will not defend your cause. The experience I have had since I came into office renders it impossible for me at once to maintain office and the Corn Law.' The right hon. baronet resigned—he was then no longer your Minister. He came back to office as the Minister of his sovereign and of the people.

All those who remember Bright in the days of the Anti-Corn Law agitation have passed away, and it is now impossible to collect those personal and private details about him, at that time, which are so valuable to the biographer. I have, however, met one person who knew Bright intimately in those days—his sister Mrs. McLaren. But when I had the pleasure of calling upon her she was in advanced years and delicate health, though full of intelligence and vivacity. She told me that she was with her distinguished brother at Inverness in 1845, when Mr. Cobden wrote stating that he would be obliged to retire from public life owing to financial embarrassments. The news distressed Bright greatly, and put an end to his holiday. Cobden's letter was destroyed at his request, but we have what Lord Morley rightly calls Bright's 'beautiful' reply:

Inverness: September 20, 1845.

MY DEAR COBDEN,—I received your letter of the 15th yesterday evening, on my arrival here. Its contents have made me more sad than I can express; it seems as if this untoward event contained within it an affliction personal for myself, great public loss, a heavy blow to one for whom I feel a sincere friendship and not a little of danger to the great cause in which we have been fellow-labourers.

I would return home without a day's delay if I had a valid excuse for my sisters, who are here with me. We have now been out nearly three weeks, and may possibly be as much longer before we reach home;

our plan being pretty well chalked out beforehand, I don't see how I can greatly change it without giving a sufficient reason. But it does not appear needful that you should take any hasty step in the matter. Too much is at stake, both for you and for the public, to make any sudden decision advisable. I may therefore be home in time for us to have some conversation before anything comes before the public. Nothing of it shall pass my lips, and I would urge nothing to be done till the latest moment, in the hope that some way of escape may yet be found. I am of opinion that your retirement would be tantamount to a dissolution of the League; its mainspring would be gone. I can in no degree take your place. As a second I can fight ; but there are incapacities about me, of which I am fully conscious, which prevent my being more than a second in such a work as we have laboured in. Do not think I wish to add to your trouble by writing thus ; but I am most anxious that some delay should take place, and therefore I urge that which I fully believe, that the League's existence depends mostly upon you, and that if the shock cannot be avoided, it should be given only after the weightiest consideration, and in such way as to produce the least evil.

Be assured that in all this disappointment you have my heartfelt sympathy. We have worked long and hard and cordially together, and I can say most truly that the more I have known of you, the more have I had reason to admire and esteem you ; and now, when a heavy cloud seems upon us, I must not wholly give up the hope that we may yet labour in the good cause until all is gained for which we have striven. You speak of the attempts which have been made to raise the passion which led to the death of Abel, and to weaken us by destroying the confidence which was needful to our successful co-operation. If such attempts have been made, they have wholly failed. To help on the cause, I am sure each of us would in any way have led or followed; we held our natural and just position, and hence our success. In myself I know nothing that at this moment would rejoice me more, except the absence of these difficulties, than that my retirement from the field could in any way maintain you in the front rank. The victory is now in reality gained, and our object will before very long be accomplished; but it is often as difficult to leave a victory as to gain it, and the sagacity of leaders cannot be dispensed with while anything remains to be done. Be assured I shall think of little else but this distressing turn of affairs till I meet you; and whilst I am sorry that such should be the position of things, I cannot but applaud the determination you show to look them full in the face, and to grapple with the difficulties whilst they are yet surmountable. I have written this letter under feelings to which I have not been able to give expression, but you will believe that I am, with much sympathy and esteem,

Your sincere friend,
JOHN BRIGHT.

Despite this letter, in a few days Bright hastened 'southwards' to be near his friend. In 1889, a few months after Bright's death, I met Charles Villiers—the father of the Anti-Corn Law movement—at the house of a friend. We talked of Bright. Villiers said, 'Well, it is perhaps all the better that Bright has gone. It would have been a great trial to him to have lived to see the principles for which he fought so strenuously and successfully overthrown' (at this time the subject of 'Fair Trade'—the thin end, people said, of the Protectionist wedge—

occupied public attention). I said, 'Assuredly you do not think that there is any danger of the principles of Free Trade being overturned.' Villiers shook his head and said, 'Oh! anything may happen.' The idea of Fair Trade (which was regarded at the time as a joke by both English parties) has since developed into Tariff Reform; and Tariff Reform is now the policy of the Tory Party. Will England return to Protection? That is the question of the hour. I shall conclude this chapter by quoting a letter written by Bright to Mr. Lord, of Bradford, in 1881 on the question of 'Reciprocal Tariffs':

One Ash, Rochdale: April 15, 1881.

SIR,—I cannot reply at length to letters like yours. Only last week, I think, a letter from me on the subject on which you have written was published in your newspaper. I can only refer you to it.

The home trade is bad, mainly or entirely because our harvests have been bad for several years. During the last two or three years I believe the agricultural classes—owners and occupiers of land in the three kingdoms—have lost more than 150 millions sterling through the great deficiency of our harvests. This great loss must inevitably and seriously depress all our other industries. It is not Bradford alone that has suffered. Rochdale in its flannel trade has suffered, the whole cotton trade of Lancashire has suffered greatly, and much of all this is to be attributed to the condition of our great farming interest, and this again to the unfavourable seasons of several recent years.

The remedy will come with more sunshine and better yield from the land. Without this it cannot come. To imagine that your suffering springs now from hostile tariffs is absurd, because you have had great prosperity with the same tariffs; but to suppose your case will be improved by refusing to buy what you want from foreigners, to punish them for not buying freely from you, seems to me an idea and a scheme only worthy of the inmates of a lunatic asylum.

To return to Protection, under the name of reciprocity, is to confess to the Protectionists abroad that we have been wrong and that they are right, and Protection will henceforth be the justified policy of all nations. If Protection be needful and good, surely at this moment it is needful for our farming class; and yet who dares to propose another sliding scale or a fixed duty on the import of foreign corn? Bradford must be watchful and patient—to look out for new markets or new products for her looms, and to endure a temporary reverse, to be followed, I trust, at no remote period, with a revival of prosperity. Bradford has had a good 'innings' since 1860. She gained more than other towns from Mr. Cobden's treaty with France. Great success and great expansion of business are followed by depression, to be followed, I hope and believe, by a return to a fair measure of prosperity. But our recovery depends more on the produce of our harvests than on foreign tariffs or on the changes in the fashion of dress to which you refer.

I am, sincerely yours,
JOHN BRIGHT.

MR. W. Y. LORD,
1 Norfolk Street, Bradford.

NOTE TO CHAPTER III

During the crisis of 1846 it was feared that the House of Lords would not support Peel in his efforts to repeal the Corn Law. The Prince Consort said to the Duke of Wellington, 'You have such an influence over the House of Lords that you will be able to keep them straight.' The Duke of Wellington replied, 'I'll do anything; I am now beginning to write to them and to convince them singly of what their duty is.'

The Duke of Wellington did keep the House of Lords straight, and it has been said that his action in doing so on this critical occasion is his best claim to statesmanship. On May 28, 1846, he moved the second reading of the Anti-Corn Law Bill. He said:

> My noble friend [Lord Stanley], whose absence on this occasion I much lament, urged you, and in the strongest manner, to vote against this measure; and he told you, in terms which I cannot attempt to imitate, that it was your duty to step in and protect the people of this country from rash and inconsiderate measures passed by the other House of Parliament, and which, in his opinion, were inconsistent with the views and opinions of the people themselves. My Lords, there is no doubt whatever that it is your duty to consider all the measures which are brought before you, and that it is your right to vote in regard to those measures as you think proper, and, most particularly, it is your duty to vote against those that appear to be rash and inconsiderate; but, my Lords, I beg leave to point out to your Lordships that it is also your duty to consider well the consequences of any vote you give on any subject—to consider well the situation in which you place this House—nay, my Lords, that it is the duty of every one of you to place himself in the situation of this House, to ponder well the consequences of his vote and all the circumstances attending it, and the situation, I repeat, in which this House would be

placed if it should adopt the vote which he himself is about to give.

. . . . . .

This measure, my Lords, was recommended by the Speech from the Throne, and it has been passed by a majority of the House of Commons, consisting of more than half the members of that House. But my noble friend said that [it is] inconsistent with the supposed views of the constituents by whom they were elected. But, my Lords, I think that is not a subject which this House can take into its consideration—for, first, we can have no accurate knowledge of the fact; and, secondly, whether it be the fact or not, this we know—that it is the House of Commons from which this Bill comes to us. We know by the votes that it has been passed by a majority of the House of Commons; we know that is recommended by the Crown; and we know that, if we should reject this Bill, it is a Bill which has been agreed to by the other two branches of the Legislature, and that the House of Lords stands alone in rejecting this measure. Now that, my Lords, is a situation in which, I beg to remind your Lordships, I have frequently stated you ought not to stand; it is a position in which you cannot stand, because you are entirely powerless; without the House of Commons and the Crown, the House of Lords can do nothing. You have vast influence on public opinion; you may have great confidence in your own principles; but without the Crown and the House of Commons you can do nothing—till the connexion with the Crown and the House of Commons is revived, there is an end of the functions of the House of Lords.[1]

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[1] See *Letters of Queen Victoria*, vol. ii. p. 77, and *Hansard.*

CHAPTER IV

IRELAND

Part I.—English Policy

There was perhaps no subject in which Bright felt a keener interest during the best part of his public life than in Ireland. I have heard it said that Bright and Disraeli were the only Englishmen who in days past understood the Irish Question ; but that while Bright tried to remedy the evils of English misgovernment in the island, Disraeli did not trouble himself about them. Nevertheless, the Irish 'problem' was never better stated than by the brilliant adventurer who was destined to become leader of the Tory Party, and Prime Minister of England. Speaking in the House of Commons in 1844, he said :

> The Irish, in extreme distress, inhabit an island where there is an Established Church which is not their Church, and a territorial aristocracy the richest of whom live in foreign capitals. Thus you have a starving population, an absentee aristocracy, and an alien Church ; and in addition the weakest executive in the world. That is the Irish Question. Well, then, what would hon. gentlemen say if they were reading

of a country in that position? They would say at once, 'The remedy is revolution.' But the Irish cannot have a revolution, and why? Because Ireland is connected with another and more powerful country. Then what is the consequence? The connexion with England thus became the cause of the present state of Ireland. If the connexion with England prevents a revolution, and a revolution is the only remedy, England logically is in the odious position of being the cause of all the misery of Ireland. What, then, is the duty of an English Minister? To effect by his policy all those changes which a revolution would do by force. That is the Irish Question in its integrity.

It is interesting to observe that Bright fully recognised that Disraeli understood the Irish Question as well as he did himself. Speaking in the House of Commons, in 1868, on Mr. John Francis Maguire's motion for an inquiry into the state of Ireland (then convulsed by Fenianism), Bright asked what was the cause of Irish discontent and disloyalty, and went on:

The right hon. gentleman at the head of the Government [Disraeli] understands it not only as well as I do, but he understands it precisely in the same sense; and more than twenty years ago, when I stated in this House the things, or nearly the things, I stated recently and shall state to-night, he, from your own benches, was making speeches exactly of the same import. And though there is many a thing he seems at times not to recollect, yet I am bound to say he recollects these words, and the impressions of which these words were the expressions to the House. He referred to an absentee aristocracy and an alien Church. I would not say a syllable about the aristocracy in this matter; if I had to choose a phrase, I would rather say an absentee proprietary and an alien Church.

Bright, as we have seen, entered the House of Commons in 1843, and Ireland soon engaged his attention. Replying to an address presented to him in Dublin in 1866, he gave an interesting little bit of autobiography:

> The address speaks of the friendly feeling and the sympathy which I have had for Ireland during my political career. When I first went into the House of Commons the most prominent figure in it was Daniel O'Connell. I have sat by his side for hours in that House, and listened to observations both amusing and instructive on what was passing under discussion. I have seen him, too, more than once upon the platforms of the Anti-Corn Law League. I recollect that on one occasion he sent to Ireland expressly for a newspaper for me, which contained a report of a speech which he made against the Corn Law when the Corn Law was passing through Parliament in 1815; and we owe much to his exertions in connexion with that question, for almost the whole Liberal—I suppose the whole Liberal—Party of the Irish representatives in Parliament supported the measure of free trade of which we were the prominent advocates; and I know of nothing that was favourable to freedom, whether in connexion with Ireland or England, that O'Connell did not support with all his great powers.

On another occasion he also recalled reminiscences of O'Connell. He said:

> I asked him on one occasion if he would write me an autograph for a lady, a relative of mine, who wished to preserve it. He went into the lobby, and, taking a pen, wrote these four lines:

Within that land was many a malcontent,
Who cursed the tyranny to which he bent;
That land full many a wringing despot saw
Who worked his tyranny in form of law.

Bright was once told that he did not know much about Ireland. He answered triumphantly:

> I am told that I have not been much in Ireland, and do not know much of it. I recollect a man in England during the American War asking me a question about America. When I gave him an answer which did not agree with his opinion, he said, 'I think you have never been in America, have you?' I said I had not; and he replied, 'Well, I have been there three times, and I know something of them.' He was asking me whether I thought the Yankees would pay when they borrowed money to carry on the war; and I thought they would. But, as he had been there, he thought his opinion was worth more than mine. I told him I knew several people who had lived in England all their lives, and yet knew very little about England. I am told that if I were to live in Ireland amongst the people I should have a different opinion; that I should think the State Church of a small minority was honest, in the face of the great Church of the majority; that I should think it was not the fault of the landowners or of the law in any degree, but the fault of the tenants, that everything went wrong with regard to the land; and that I should find that it was the Government that was mostly right, and the legislation right, and that it was the people that were mostly wrong. There are certain questions with regard to any country that you may settle in your own house, never having seen that country even upon a map. This you may settle, that what is just is just everywhere, and that men, from those of the highest culture even to those of the most moderate capacity, whatever may

be their race, whatever their colour, have implanted in their hearts by their Creator, wiser much than my critics, the knowledge and the love of justice. I will tell you that since the day when I sat beside O'Connell —and at an earlier day—I have considered this question of Ireland. In 1849 for several weeks in the autumn, and for several weeks in the autumn of 1852, I came to Ireland expressly to examine this question by consulting with all classes of the people in every part of the island. I will undertake to say that I believe there is no man in England who has more fully studied the evidence given before the celebrated Devon Commission in regard to Ireland than I have. Therefore I dare stand up before any Irishman or Englishman to discuss the Irish Question.

From the time that Bright entered Parliament until the year 1868 there was no attempt at statesmanship in the English government of Ireland. Peel was Prime Minister when Bright became member for Durham. Ireland was agitated by the Repeal movement. Peel adopted a policy of sops; *inter alia*, he increased the grant to Maynooth originally given by the Irish Parliament in 1795. Bright opposed the measure. He said in effect that it was trifling with the issue. Irish discontent could not be removed by adding to the endowment of a college for the education of the Catholic priesthood. More drastic remedies were needed. What the Irish people wanted was the disestablishment of the English State Church in Ireland and the reform of the Land system by the creation of a farmer proprietary. Bright felt no hostility to the Catholic Church in Ireland. He was out of sympathy, as he said, with 'the doctrines of Rome.' But it seems to me that he was always in sympathy with Irish Catholics, lay and clerical, and for this reason: because in Ireland the Catholic Church was the National Church, and it was supported by voluntary contributions. He once said:

> No greater instance of generosity and fidelity to their Church can be seen in the world than that which has been manifested by the Catholic people of Ireland.

But he objected to the grant to Maynooth (apart from his general disapproval of State endowments for religion) because (to use an expression of D'Arcy McGee) it was 'tinkering with the old tin kettle.' In a passage which showed his knowledge of Ireland, his statesmanship, and his contempt for Peel's miserable makeshifts, he said:

> The object of this Bill is to tone down those agitators —it is a sop given to the priests. It is hush-money given that they may not proclaim to the whole country, to Europe, and to the world the sufferings of the population to whom they administer the rites and the consolations of religion. I assert that the Protestant Church of Ireland is at the root of the evils of that country. The Irish Catholics would thank you infinitely more if you were to wipe out that foul blot than they would even if Parliament were to establish the Roman Catholic Church alongside of it. They have had everything Protestant—a Protestant clique which has been dominant in the country; a Protestant Viceroy to distribute places and emoluments amongst that Protestant clique; Protestant judges who have polluted the seats of justice; Protestant magistrates before whom the Catholic peasant could not hope for

justice. They have not only Protestant but exterminating landlords, and, more than that, a Protestant soldiery, who at the beck and command of a Protestant priest have butchered and killed a Catholic peasant, even in the presence of his widowed mother. All these things are notorious ; I merely state them. I do not bring the proof of them ; they are patent to all the world, and that man must have been unobservant indeed who is not perfectly convinced of their truth. The consequence of all this is the extreme discontent of the Irish people ; and because this House is not prepared yet to take those measures which would be really doing justice to Ireland, and to wipe away that Protestant Establishment which is the most disgraceful institution in Christendom, the next thing is that they should drive off the watch-dogs, if it be possible, and take from Mr. O'Connell and the Repeal Association that formidable organisation which has been established throughout the whole country, through the sympathies of the Catholic priests being bound up with the interests of the people. Their object is to take away the sympathy of the Catholic priests from the people, and to give them more Latin and Greek. The object is to make the priests in Ireland as tame as those of Suffolk and Dorsetshire. The object is that when the horizon is brightened every night with incendiary fires, no priest of the paid Establishment shall ever tell of the wrongs of the people amongst whom he is living ; and when the population is starving, and pauperised by thousands, as in the southern parts of England, the priests shall not unite themselves with any association for the purpose of wresting from an oppressive Government those rights to which the people have a claim.

1847 was a year of famine. Evictions followed in the wake of famine, agrarian outrages followed evictions. Coercion was the remedy of the Government, and in December a 'Crime and Outrage' Bill was introduced. Bright did not oppose the Bill. He always took the line—and indeed once reminded me of the fact—that as the executive were responsible for law and order, their demand for exceptional legislation could not be denied. But he held in 1847 and throughout his life that 'force was no remedy.'

In 1848 and 1849 there were more Irish debates, more contemptible and imbecile proposals for dealing with the discontent and calamities of the country. But Bright alone, among the English statesmen of the period, went to the root of the question and pointed out the way of remedial legislation. 'Disestablish the Church, reform the Land laws,' he cried out again and again, but always in vain. In 1849 an Ulster landlord (Mr. Bateson) said that the Government of Lord John Russell was to blame for the misfortunes of Ireland. He brought upon himself a crushing retort. Bright said:

> The hon. member has charged the Government with having caused the calamities of Ireland. Now, if I were the hon. member, I would not have opened up that question. My opinion is that the course which Parliament has taken with respect to Ireland for upwards of a century, and especially since the Union, has been in accordance with the wishes of the proprietors of the land of that country. If, therefore, there has been misgovernment in Ireland during that period, it is the land which has influenced Parliament, and the landowners are responsible. I do not mean to say that the House of Commons is not responsible for taking the evil advice which the landowners of Ireland have proffered, but what I mean to assert is:

this advice has been almost invariably acted upon by the Government. This it is which has proved fatal to the interests of Ireland; the Ulster men have stood in the way of improvements in the Franchise, in the Church, and in the Land Question; they have purchased Protestant ascendancy, and the price paid for it is the ruin and degradation of their country.

Nor did he spare Ministers—even Liberal Ministers—themselves. In the same speech, pointing to the Treasury Bench, he said:

But the treatment of this Irish malady remains ever the same. We have nothing for it still but force and alms. You have an armed force there of 50,000 men to keep the people quiet, large votes are annually required to keep the people quiet, and large votes are annually required to keep the people alive. I presume the government by troops is easy, and that the

Civil power may snore at ease
While soldiers fire—to keep the peace.

But the noble lord at the head of the Government has no policy to propose for Ireland. If he had, he would have told us what it is before now.

The peroration of this speech must have been a bitter draught to the English House of Commons. Indeed, it needed no ordinary courage for an Englishman to tell the home truths which Bright then uttered. But he spared not his audience.

Sir, I am ashamed, I must say, of the course which we have taken upon this question. Look at that great subscription that was raised three years ago for Ireland. There was scarcely a part of the globe from which subscriptions did not come. The Pope, as was very natural, subscribed; the head of the great Mahomedan empire, the Grand Seignior, sent his thousand pounds; the uttermost parts of the earth sent in their donations. A tribe of Red Indians on the American continent sent their subscription; and I have it on good authority that even the slaves on a plantation in one of the Carolinas subscribed their sorrowful mite that the miseries of Ireland might be relieved. The whole world looked upon the condition of Ireland and helped to mitigate her miseries. What can we say to all those contributors who, now that they have paid, must be anxious to know if anything is done to prevent a recurrence of these calamities? We must tell them with blushes that nothing has been done, but that we are still going on with the poor-rates, and that, having exhausted the patience of the people of England in Parliamentary grants, we are coming now with rates in aid, restricted altogether to the property of Ireland. That is what we have to tell them; whilst we have to acknowledge that our Constitution, boasted of as it has been for generations past, utterly fails to grapple with this great question.

Hon. gentlemen turn with triumph to neighbouring countries and speak in glowing terms of our glorious Constitution. It is true that abroad thrones and dynasties have been overturned, whilst in England peace has reigned undisturbed. But take all the lives that have been lost in the last twelve months in Europe amidst the convulsions that have occurred—take all the cessation of trade, the destruction of industry, all the crushing of hopes and hearts, and they will not compare for an instant with the agonies which have been endured by the population of Ireland under your glorious Constitution. And there are those who now say that this is the ordering of Providence. I met an Irish gentleman the other night, and, speaking upon the subject, he said that he saw no remedy, but that it seemed as if the present state of things were the mode by which Providence intended to solve the question of Irish difficulties. But let us not lay these calamities at the door of Providence; it were sinful in us, of all men, to do so. God has blessed Ireland—and does still bless her—in position, in soil, in climate; He has not withdrawn His promises, nor are they unfulfilled; there is still the sunshine and the shower; still the seed-time and the harvest; and the affluent bosom of the earth yet offers sustenance for man. But man must do his part—we must do our part—we must retrace our steps—we must shun the blunders, and I would even say the crimes, of our past legislation. We must free the land, and then we shall discover, and not till then, that industry hopeful and remunerated—industry free and inviolate—is the only sure foundation on which can be reared the enduring edifice of union and of peace.

In a long and detailed account of a journey in Ireland in 1849 he wrote to a friend:

We left Cork by coach for Skibbereen—the famous Skibbereen—and we found the details of its afflictions not exaggerated. We visited the workhouse; 2600 persons in the principal and the additional buildings. As many as 105 persons have died in a week in this place during the fever and cholera visitation. Behind the workhouse is a small piece of land fenced off from a field, not more than a quarter of an acre—in trenches in this space are buried 600 victims of famine and fever and cholera, buried in the rags they died in, 'uncoffined and unknown.' The green corn now waves over them. It is a melancholy spot. We saw a girl trying to sell a basket of turf in the market place. It weighed 62 lb. She had carried it on her back 8½ miles. It had been cut and dried previously. She asked 1½*d.* for it!!!

> On the road from Cork to Skibbereen and Bantry there are, I think, scores, perhaps hundreds, of roofless and ruined cottages—women, wives and mothers, out listlessly and despairingly at their cabin doors, and little children almost naked and squalid and wan, afford testimony to the stricken condition of the district.

Again in the same year he wrote:

> We are to have a Free Trade meeting, when I shall probably say something about Ireland. The usual scenes of outrage and murder are again being enacted in that wretched country. If England had no connexion with Ireland, the question of Irish maladies would soon be settled in the blood of its proprietary classes. . . .
>
> I am reading about Ireland and thinking about her almost continually, and am quite clear as to what is required for her; but our aristocratic Government will see the people perish by thousands rather than yield anything of their privileges or usurpations.

And again:

> I have the Irish Poor Law Committee to attend three days in the week. . . . I often feel quite distressed about these miserable Irish. They are dying of hunger and fever and cholera, and nobody seems to have a notion of what is to be done to help them. Grants of money seem only to postpone their doom, and their ruin seems inevitable. There is no other country under heaven where a like state of things exists unless it be in Africa, where war and fire and capture are the fate of the weakest tribes; and all this is under our glorious Constitution in Church and State!

While Bright believed that the Church and Land Questions were at the root of Irish discontent, he persistently advocated the extension of the franchise to the masses of the people in order that Ireland might be fairly, honestly, and effectively represented in the English Parliament. In 1848 he said :

> I assert most distinctly that the representation which exists at this moment is a fraud ; and I believe it would be far better if there were no representation at all, because the people would not then be deluded by the idea that they had a representative Government to protect their interests.

In 1850 Lord John Russell introduced a half-hearted Irish Reform Bill proposing (*inter alia*) an £8 rating franchise in counties. The Bill, after much obstruction, passed the Commons, but in the Lords the proposed £8 rating franchise was raised to £15. When the Bill came back to the Commons Lord John Russell suggested a compromise fixing the franchise at £12. Bright denounced the Prime Minister for not standing to his guns. He said :

> This Bill, as it appears to me, is the measure of the Session. We are about to separate without any measure of public importance being passed besides this measure, and it must be admitted that the Government have a very sorry account to render to the country for the time which has been taken up by Parliament during the past six months. No man, I presume, is of opinion that the Government grappled with the question of the Irish representation before it was absolutely necessary to do so. They found the representation of Ireland virtually extinguished. They found eight millions of people living under a Constitution of which nobody in this House or in the country boasts so much as the noble lord at the head of the Government, and yet having literally no representation whatever. . . . The

noble lord defended the £8 franchise in this House in a manner which to me was perfectly satisfactory. . . . We felt somewhat satisfied that the noble lord at least meant to stand by and to carry through Parliament what he had proposed. How then, has he acted? The noble lord, be it remembered, is at the head of the Government, and it would not do for him to say that he has not voted as the Marquess of Lansdowne has in the other House. Although I have not the exact words before me, I believe I shall be supported by the recollection of hon. members when I say that the conduct of the Government in the other House has not only been directly contrary to its conduct in this House, but that it affords the greatest reason for believing that when the noble lord and his colleagues proposed the £8 franchise in this House it was not intended that that franchise should be passed, but that it should be raised to some other amount.

The £12 franchise was finally accepted by both Houses.

Between 1850 and 1868 no measure was placed on the statute book to give effect to Bright's Irish policy. The Church was not disestablished, the Land system was not reformed, and the Irish representation still remained a 'fraud.' But between 1865 and 1870 Fenianism forced the question of Ireland on the attention of the English public. In 1865 there were Irish State trials which revealed the existence of a widespread movement to overthrow the English power in the island. In April 1866 the old familiar remedy for Irish disaffection—the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act—was proposed. Bright took part in the debate, and delivered what I think was not only the best speech he ever made on Ireland, but almost the best speech which he ever made on any subject. He occupied a triumphant position. For nearly a quarter of a century (as he reminded the House) he had advocated the cause of Ireland, but advocated it in vain. He had foreseen, foretold, forewarned, but all to no purpose. His advice and his proposals were flung to the winds. He now, with a courage, a dignity, and a moral grandeur which only one of his oratorical stature and splendid Irish record could assume in the discussion, rebuked English statesmen and the English Parliament, not only for their misgovernment of Ireland, but for their inability to understand the Irish Question. He said :

> I have not risen to blame the Secretary of State or to blame his colleagues for the act of to-day. There may be circumstances to justify a proposition of this kind, and I am not here to deny that these circumstances now exist ; but what I complain of is this : there is no statesmanship merely in acts of force and acts of repression. And, more than that, I have not observed since I have been in Parliament anything on this Irish Question that approaches to the dignity of statesmanship. There has been, I admit, an improved administration in Ireland. There have been Lord-Lieutenants anxious to be just, and there is one there now who is probably as anxious to do justice as any man. We have observed generally in the recent trials a better tone and temper than were ever witnessed under similar circumstances in Ireland before. But if I go back to the Ministers who have sat on the Treasury Bench since I first came into this House—Sir Robert Peel first, then Lord John Russell, then Lord Aberdeen, then Lord Derby, then Lord Palmerston, then Lord Derby again, then Lord Palmerston again, and now Earl

Russell—I say that with regard to all these men, there has not been any approach to anything that history will describe as statesmanship on the part of the English Government towards Ireland. There were Coercion Bills in abundance; Arms Bills Session after Session; lamentations like that of the right hon. gentleman the member for Buckinghamshire [Mr. Disraeli] that the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act was not made perpetual by a clause which he laments was repealed. There have been Acts for the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act, like that which we are now discussing; but there has been no statesmanship. Men the most clumsy and brutal can do these things; but we want men of higher temper, men of higher genius, men of higher patriotism, to deal with the affairs of Ireland. I should like to know whether those statesmen who hold great offices have themselves comprehended the nature of this question. If they have not, they have been manifestly ignorant; and if they have comprehended it and have not dealt with it, they have concealed that which they knew from the people, and evaded the duty they owed to their sovereign. I do not want to speak disrespectfully of men in office. It is not my custom in this House. I know something of the worrying labours to which they are subjected, and I know not how from day to day they bear the burden of the labour imposed upon them; but still I lament that those who wear the garb, enjoy the emoluments, and I had almost said usurp the dignity, of statesmanship sink themselves merely into respectable and honourable administrators, when there is a whole nation under the sovereignty of the Queen calling for all their anxious thoughts—calling for the highest exercise of the highest qualities of the statesman. I put the question to the Chancellor of the Exchequer [Mr. Gladstone]. He is the only man of this Government whom I have heard of late years who has spoken as if he comprehended this question, and he made a speech in the last Session of Parliament which was not without its influence both in England and in Ireland. I should like to ask him whether this Irish Question is above the stature of himself and of his colleagues? If it be, I ask them to come down from the high places which they occupy, and try to learn the art of legislation and government before they practise it. I myself believe, if we could divest ourselves of the feelings engendered by party strife, we might come to some better result. Take the Chancellor of the Exchequer [Mr. Gladstone]. Is there in any legislative assembly in the world a man, as the world judges, of more transcendent capacity? I will say even, is there a man with a more honest wish to do good to the country in which he occupies so conspicuous a place?

Take the right hon. gentleman opposite, the Leader of the Opposition [Mr. Disraeli]—is there in any legislative assembly in the world, at this moment, a man leading an Opposition of more genius for his position, who has given in every way but one in which proof can be given that he is competent to the highest duties of the highest offices of the State? Well, but these men—great men, whom we on this side and you on that side, to a large extent, admire and follow—fight for office, and the result is they sit alternately one on this side and one on that.

But suppose it were possible for these men, with their intellects, with their far-reaching vision, to examine this question thoroughly, and to say for once, whether this leads to office and to the miserable notoriety that men call fame which springs from office, or not, 'If it be possible we will act with loyalty to the sovereign and justice to the people; and if it be possible, we will make Ireland a strength and not a weakness to the British Empire.' It is from this fighting with party, and for party, and for the gains which party gives, that there is so little result from the great intellect of such men as these. Like the captive Samson of old,

> They grind in brazen fetters, under task,
> With their Heaven-gifted strength;

and the country and the world gain little by those faculties which God has given them for the blessing of the country and the world.

In 1867 a petition was prepared by Mr. Congreve, Mr. Frederic Harrison, Professor Beesly, Dr. Bridges, Mr. Crompton, and other Positivists, relating to the Fenians, urging that, as political offenders, they should be treated 'with as much leniency as was consistent with the preservation of order.' The petitioners, while disapproving of Fenianism, stated in effect that the Fenian movement itself was produced by English misgovernment in Ireland. The petition asserted, *inter alia*, 'that the actual government of Ireland is the government of the conquered by the conqueror, as is shown by the maintenance, against the undoubted wishes of the bulk of the nation, of the Irish Church Establishment, and by the enforcement of a system of landlords at variance with the traditions and feelings of the Irish people,' and added: 'That there is legitimate ground for the chronic discontent of which Fenianism is the expression, and therefore palliation for the errors of Fenianism.'

The petitioners, in the first instance, asked Mr. Gladstone to present this petition to the House of Commons, but he refused; they then asked Bright, who consented. I believe that it was his intention originally merely to state as briefly as possible what the petition was about; but finding that a spirit of hostility to its presentation was evinced, he read it from beginning to end. He was interrupted several times, but he resolutely held on the even tenor of his way, and the Speaker ruled the interruptions out of order. Having come to the end of the petition, Bright said with calm defiance, 'In the general spirit of that petition I entirely agree.'

On May 3 the petition was allowed to lie on the table, but on June 14 Major Anson moved 'the discharge of the order of the House of May 4.' Bright was absent during the debate which ensued. Mr. Disraeli (Chancellor of the Exchequer) took part in the discussion, saying:

> I think that the expressions of opinion contained in this petition are disapproved by the entire body of the House with very rare exceptions, and that but few coincide in the opinions which we might have heard to-night from an hon. member whom we all greatly respect. But upon the whole, and looking at all the circumstances, we must consider, not whether there may not be some expressions of opinion in this petition which cannot for a moment be justified, which are outrageous in sentiment and which are erroneous in argument, but whether by the solemn act of the House of Commons rejecting a petition presented to them by persons who, from their education and social position, ought certainly to be of a respectable character, we shall not appear to sanction the idea that we are endeavouring to suppress opinions of which we do not approve.

Major Anson's motion was then rejected.

Six months afterwards Bright delivered, at Rochdale, one of those vigorous, not to say violent, speeches on Ireland which so frequently shocked orthodox Whigs and Tories alike. In this speech he said:

> I entirely disagree with those who, when any crisis or trouble arises in Ireland, say that you must first of all preserve order—you must put down all disloyalty and disobedience to the law, you must assert the supremacy of the Government, and then consider the grievances that are complained of. This has been the case in Ireland for two hundred years. The great preserver there has been the gallows. Now, twenty years ago many of you will recollect that in Ireland, under the guidance of one of Ireland's greatest sons, the late Mr. O'Connell, there were held in Ireland meetings of vast numbers of the people, equal probably in number to the meetings that were held a year ago in Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds, Glasgow, and in London. Those meetings were held to condemn certain things that were evil in Ireland, to demand remedies, even to insist that there should be a repeal of the legislative union between the two countries, for many thought that only an Irish Parliament could abolish the miseries of Ireland; but there is not one of you that can point to any single great measure of justice which has been given to Ireland in consequence of these great meetings. The grievances were not remedied. The demands of the people were not conceded. Nothing has been done in Ireland except under the influence of terror.

In September 1867 two Fenian leaders, Kelly and Deasy, were arrested in Manchester. Their comrades in the city resolved to rescue them. Accordingly, as the van conveying them was on its way from the police court to the gaol at Bellevue, it was attacked.

The prisoners were liberated, and a policeman, Sergeant Brett, was shot dead in the struggle. Three Fenians —Allen, Larkin, and O'Brien — were arrested for killing Brett, and tried, convicted, and hanged on November 23, 1867. Bright was strongly opposed to the execution of these men. It was wrong, he said in effect, to hang three men for a deed which could only have been committed by one, assuming that the right man was in custody, which he doubted.[1] He wrote two letters on the subject to Mr. Justin McCarthy, who was at that time editor of the *Morning Star* :

Llandudno : Nov. 8, 1867.

DEAR SIR,—I am surprised that the leaders on the Manchester Fenians should so readily give up Allen to the gallows—asserting even that he glories in bloodshedding.

The fact is that he denies having shot the poor man Brett ; and the convicts or prisoners say that the man who did it is not even in custody. Allen's uncle and aunt called on me last Saturday and urged that he was not guilty of the murder, and that his life should not be taken on the sort of evidence tendered.

The witnesses are now discredited ; and I think you should urge that to hang any after the breakdown of the evidence will be much to be deplored.[2]

I am certain that to hang these men will embitter the whole Irish Question. Allen is but nineteen, a hot, enthusiastic youth, impelled by a passion for nationality, and thoughtless of the folly or crime of the conspiracy.

The *Star* should not say a word in favour of hanging anybody. There are plenty of writers on the Press to do that.

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[1] Some one had fired at the lock of the door with the intention of forcing it and so enabling the prisoners to escape. Brett was inside the van, and was hit by the bullet and killed.

[2] See *Fifty Years of Concession to Ireland*, vol. ii. p. 226, n.

In haste,
Yours truly,
JOHN BRIGHT.

Rochdale : Dec. 18, 1867.

DEAR SIR,—I am afraid you are doing the 'sensational' very strongly about the 'outrage.' People will think you are afraid of being thought disloyal, and so write up to the 'horror' of the occasion.

The *Star*, more than any other London paper, has a right to look calmly on these sad shocking events. They are but the natural results of all that has gone before in connexion with the Irish Question; and I suppose now, when something of a crisis has come, 'statesmen' will begin to think something will have to be done.

In Ireland Government is being dissolved. Did you see the case before the magistrates where Mr. Sullivan and Sir John Gray refused to become Crown witnesses? Such a character or office is ruin to the reputation in Ireland. The Tory Government is reaping the results of Tory principles.

Desperate men are coming to the front, and desperate deeds are done. After a certain amount of exasperation and agitation, certain men become reckless and cruel as devils; and our statesmanship is helpless till things come near this point. I would not pile the 'horrors' needlessly, or spread rumours without sufficient foundation.

I am not in the midst of the 'terror,' and perhaps see and speak more calmly than I might if in London. Therefore, forgive these hints if you think them not seasonable.

Always sincerely yours,
JOHN BRIGHT.

In 1868, proposals for dealing with the Church and Land Questions in one Act of Parliament were submitted to Bright, and in acknowledgment he wrote the following remarkable letter to a friend in Ireland:

Rochdale: January 27, 1868.

My dear Sir,—I have read the 'proposals' over with great interest and care. They are wide, and embrace the whole Irish difficulty, and, if adopted, would at once apply a remedy to the two branches of the grand question. For twenty years I have always said that the only way to remedy the evils of Ireland is by legislation on the Church and land. But we are met still with this obstacle, even yet I fear insurmountable, that the legislation must come from and through a Parliament which is not Irish, and in which every principle essential for the regeneration of Ireland is repudiated. The knowledge of this makes me hesitate as to the wisdom of your 'proposals' in their present shape. I fear the scheme is so broad, and so good and so complete that Parliament would stand aghast at it. To strike down an Established Church and to abandon the theory of our territorial system by one Act of Parliament would be too much for Parliament, and would destroy any Government that suggested it. I can conceive a condition of things in Ireland under which such a great change might be accomplished—if Ireland were united in demanding it, and were menacing Great Britain if it should be refused; but now I suspect our rulers, though uncomfortable, are not sufficiently alarmed to yield. The Tories cannot deal with Ireland. Their concession on Reform does not lead me to think they can give in on Irish affairs. The Whigs are almost as much afraid as the Tories are of questions affecting the Church and the land, and they seem to have almost no courage.

Lord Russell is old, and cannot grapple with a great question like this. Mr. Gladstone hesitates, and hardly knows how far to go. The material of his forces is not good, and I suspect he has not studied the Land Question, and knows little about it. The English people are in complete ignorance of Irish wrongs, and know little or nothing of the real condition of your country. This is a sad picture; but it is not coloured too darkly. There is no necessary connexion between the Church and the land. To make a farmer proprietary would not involve the Government in any permanent expense, and it may be done without touching the Church Question; and this, again, may be dealt with without meddling with the land. Now, the two schemes together and in one are a grand idea—perhaps too grand for so slow a nation and Parliament as ours. Many persons may be willing to get rid of the Church who are unwilling to depart from present theories with regard to the land, and some may go with you on the land and hold back on the Church. Is it supposed that for the whole scheme you can secure a larger support than for either of the two branches of it separately? This is the question you must answer. For myself, I should have no hesitation if I could persuade myself that others in sufficient numbers would follow; and, whether they follow or not, I am ready to state my general approval of your great plan, should it be brought before the public. If all the Liberal Protestants and all the Catholic population in Ireland will unite to support you, some impression may be made on English opinion and upon Parliament; but, looking to all past efforts among you, I am not very sanguine that you will succeed in bringing a strong and united pressure to bear upon our ruling class. I am expected to speak to-morrow week at Birmingham, and I intend to speak on Ireland. I am free from the trammels which fetter Mr. Gladstone, and I can speak without reserve and without fear.

What I shall say will not increase your difficulties, but will, I trust, rather smooth your path with regard to English opinion. The Liberal Party is not in a good position for undertaking any great measure of statesmanship. Some Whigs distrust Mr. Gladstone, and some, who call themselves Radicals, dislike him. He does not feel himself very secure as leader of a powerful and compact force. The Whig peers are generally feeble and timid, and shrink from anything out of the usual course. We want a strong man with a strong brain and convictions for a work of this kind, and I do not see him among our public men. I hope all that is wise and good in Ireland may support you, and that you may soon affect the opinion and conduct of Parliament.

I am, very sincerely yours,
John Bright.

However, despite Bright's doubts, Mr. Gladstone did ultimately, under the pressure of Fenianism, rise to the occasion. In 1869 his Government disestablished and partly disendowed the English State Church in Ireland, and in 1870 passed an important measure of Land Reform giving to evicted tenants compensation for improvements, and in certain cases for disturbance, and containing clauses—they were called the Bright clauses—for the creation of a farmer proprietary. But the Land Act of 1870 was not a success. Unjust evictions still went on, and the machinery for working the Bright clauses was not effective. In 1877 there was renewed agitation in Ireland, and in 1881 another Land Act was placed on the statute book. It established a tribunal to stand between landlord and tenant, and to fix fair or judicial rents ; the measure also contained clauses for further facilitating the purchase of their holdings by tenants from landlords willing to sell. Mr. Gladstone believed that the Irish Land Question could be settled by the readjustment of the relations between landlord and tenant. It was the opinion of Bright, twenty years before Mr. Gladstone had touched the subject, that it could only be settled by the creation of a 'farmer proprietary.' Time has justified the opinion of Bright, and to-day both Liberals and Tories are vying with each other in passing Acts of Parliament to carry out his policy. The farmers of Ireland are steadily becoming the owners of the land they cultivate. In the debate on the second reading of the Bill of 1881, Bright said:

> To the complaint that the Bill gives so much to the tenants and takes it all from the landlords, I should make this answer: If at this moment all that has been done by the tenant in Ireland were gone; imagine that—if all that the tenants have done were gone, and all that the owners have done left—that is the picture, the sort of map I should very much like to see; it would be charming; it would finish this debate in five minutes if this map were drawn; then, over nine-tenths of Ireland the land would be as bare of houses, of barns, of fences, and of cultivation as it was in pre-historic times. It would be as bare as an American prairie where the Indian now roams, and where the foot of the white man has never yet trodden.

In 1884 an Irish Reform Bill, which at length gave the Irish people a fair representation in the English Parliament, became law. Between 1885 and the present time no fewer than six Acts have been placed on the statute book for the purpose of creating a farmer proprietary in Ireland. Thus were Bright's plans for the amelioration of Ireland brought to fruition.

I have quoted freely from Bright's speeches, though as a rule speeches are valueless to the biographer. Perhaps the case of Bright is the one exception. 'My father's life,' said one of Bright's children to me, 'is in his speeches.' It is quite true. I have heard him speak, and his speeches have been my companions for many years; and as I read them I think I can see him standing at the table in the House of Commons, calm, dignified, titanic—a pillar of strength. In the House, on the platform, and even in his published addresses, Bright gives you that idea of suppressed energy which I once heard Isaac Butt say was the very essence of the orator's art—if indeed, in Bright's case, it was not rather the nature of the man than the art of the orator.

So far I have dealt with Bright's Irish policy from 1843 to 1884. I now turn to his position on the question of Home Rule.

CHAPTER V

IRELAND

PART II.—HOME RULE

BETWEEN 1843 and 1881 the relations between Bright and Irish popular parties in the English House of Commons were friendly and even cordial. No Irish member was in advance of him on the questions of Disestablishment, Land Reform, and the Franchise. For nearly a quarter of a century the Irish people found in him a courageous and unfaltering champion. In 1881 there was for the first time an interruption of the sympathetic relations which had so long existed between the Irish members and the English Tribune. This interruption was caused by Bright's speech in support of Mr. Forster's Coercion Bill in 1881. Sitting under the gallery I heard it. It was a bitter draught to me. However, I remained to the end in the hope that perhaps some words of comfort might finally fall from him, but I was disappointed. Going into the lobby when Bright had sat down, I met an old friend—an Irish priest—and told him about the speech. He said, 'Well, what did you expect ?' I replied, 'Well, if he found himself obliged to support the Government, why shouldn't he do what Chamberlain has done and hold his tongue?'

Priest. 'Because he is not Chamberlain. It is only characteristic of him that he should openly stand by his colleagues and speak in favour of the Bill if he thinks it necessary.'

I said, 'Well, if he thinks it necessary to speak, why should he not have made a moderate speech instead of striking out from the shoulder as he has done?'

Priest. 'Did you ever know Bright to make a speech without striking out from the shoulder? Remember what Bentinck said of him, "If he hadn't been a Quaker, he would have been a prize-fighter." For over twenty years he has been striking out from the shoulder in our favour. Are we to throw him over because he now strikes out against us? I believe he is as much with us now as ever he was. I suppose he thinks that this wretched Coercion Bill is necessary to satisfy English public opinion in order to get through a real strong Land Bill.'[1]

Subsequently (in 1884) I discussed the speech with Bright himself. I said, 'I heard your speech in support of [Mr. Forster's] Coercion Bill, and I didn't like it.'

Mr. Bright (with a smile, and stroking his chin with his finger). 'I daresay you didn't. What would you have? Remember, I voted for coercion before. The position I have always taken has been that you cannot resist the demand of the Minister who is responsible for the administration in Ireland, though you may say, as I have certainly said, that other remedies must be applied.'

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[1] This was the last conversation I had with my friend. Next day he underwent an operation, from the effects of which he died in a few days.

I said, 'The Minister in this case was wrong.'

Bright. 'Well, yes' (getting up and throwing some coal on the fire and then turning his back to it, looking withal a noble figure, as he there stood with leonine head, venerable grey hair, and dignified bearing). 'The suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act,' he continued, 'had been successful in the case of the Fenians; we supposed it would be successful in the case of the Land League. That was the mistake. The League was a bigger organisation. It extended all over the country. The arrest of the leaders did not affect it: the local branches were too well organised. For every man who was arrested there was another ready to take his place. Our information was wrong. The conspiracy was more widespread and more deeply rooted than we were led to suppose. It was not a case for the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act.'

I said, 'The policy was inexcusable.'

Bright. 'To be fair you must consider the circumstances under which the policy was adopted. Put yourself in the place of a Cabinet Minister. Suppose the Lord-Lieutenant and Chief Secretary—the men, mark, who are responsible for the government of the country, the executive—suppose they tell you that they will resign unless you give them the powers they demand, what would you say?'

I made no reply.

Bright. 'You don't answer, but what you feel inclined to say is, "Let them resign!"'

I said, 'Exactly.'

Bright. 'If you say that, it shows that you cannot put yourself in the place of a Cabinet Minister. Resignations are very serious things for a Government. They are not to be lightly accepted. There is another point. Suppose you could not get any one to fill their places. I do not say it was so; it did not come to that. I put the case. No; I admit the policy was a failure, or, at least, not as successful as we anticipated it would be. But under the circumstances, in face of the representations of the Irish Government, it was impossible to avoid trying it. Remember, too, that if we had not passed a Coercion Act we could not have got a good Land Bill through. That was a consideration which weighed much with me, and I think with all of us.'

However, the breach between Bright and the Irish members in 1881 was not irreparable. His speech on coercion was forgotten or forgiven, and when the discussions on the Reform Bill of 1884 occurred, he once more stood forth as the champion of Ireland.

During the discussion on the Bill it was suggested that the Irish representation should be reduced. Bright dealt with the proposal thus:

> Ireland has a certain claim in respect of number, and the Chief Secretary says that that claim may be fairly met by ninety-six or ninety-seven members. The Reform Bill of 1832 added five members to the representation of Ireland. Two of them vanished, and Ireland has now 103 members. Have

hon. gentlemen ever thought of the Act of Union? I say the Act of Union is final with regard to this matter. That Act declares in one of its clauses that the Protestant Church of Ireland is to be united for ever with the Church of England. We know what 'for ever' means in such a document. The Act of Union, though it was something like a treaty, was a treaty made entirely on one side. It was made by Great Britain, the powerful nation, and offered to the Irish nation. I wish the House to answer me this question. An hon. gentleman has spoken of the Irish Church. The more powerful party to a treaty or to an Act has a right to surrender anything which afterwards it believes to be unjust to the weaker party. . . .

Then, I say, there is nothing on earth will ever persuade me, except I see it done, that this Imperial Parliament, which is representative of the people of Great Britain, will lessen the just, the Act of Union, representation of Ireland in this House. The population of Ireland, reduced as it is, is, I believe, very nearly the same as it was when the number of a hundred members was originally fixed. Some hon. members say that the population of Ireland is diminishing. It has been diminishing up to the present time. I am not quite sure that that diminution is to go on. I shall be disappointed with the operation of the Land Act if it does not, to some extent, retain men upon their farms and in the country. For myself, I am determined to stand by the Act of Union. Nothing shall persuade me to vote for any smaller number; and if by reason of the separation of Ireland from Great Britain, the difficulties of intercourse, and the less power they have to influence Parliament and opinion in this country, it be thought necessary by the Government to keep the representation as it is, I shall have no difficulty in supporting it.

It was on the question of Home Rule that the final breach between Bright and the Irish members took place.

In the beginning, Bright, like the whole of the Liberal Party, was against Home Rule. In 1872 he wrote to The O'Donoghue, and in 1875 to the Reverend Thaddeus O'Malley, publicly condemning the proposal. Did his views, like the views of Mr. Gladstone and the majority of the Liberal Party, undergo a change in 1885 or in 1886? In answering this question I will set forth a conversation which I had with him on the subject at the time. On May 10, 1886, Mr. Gladstone moved the second reading of the Home Rule Bill. Lord Hartington moved its rejection, and a debate which lasted until June 7 ensued. In the interval Mr. Gladstone tried to win back the dissentient Liberals. He expressed his willingness to reconsider every detail, if only the principle of the Bill were affirmed. 'Vote for the second reading,' he said in effect; 'consent to the establishment of an Irish Parliament and an Irish Executive for the management and control of Irish affairs, and let the details wait. The second reading pledges you only to an Irish Parliament. Every other question remains open.' As for the Land Bill,[1] introduced about the same time, he practically threw it over.

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[1] On April 16 Mr. Gladstone introduced a Land Bill, which was, in fact, a pendant to the Home Rule Bill. The chief feature of this measure was a scheme for buying out the Irish landlords and for creating a peasant proprietary. The State was, in the first instance, to buy the land at twenty years' purchase of the judicial rents, or at the Government valuation, and then sell to the tenants, advancing the purchase money (which involved the issue of £50,000,000 Consols), and giving them forty-nine years to pay it back at the rate of 4 per cent. per annum. A Receiver-General was to be appointed, under British authority, to receive the rents and revenues of Ireland, while this scheme was in operation.

'While the sands are running in the hour-glass,' he said, in an oft-quoted sentence, 'the Irish landlords have as yet given no intimation of a desire to accept a proposal framed in a spirit of the utmost allowable regard to their apprehensions and their interests.' If the landlords were not prepared to accept the Bill he would ask no Liberal to vote for it. In this shape he offered the olive-branch to his old friends. Up to May 28 Bright had taken no very prominent part in opposition to the Ministerial policy, and there were rumours afloat that he was favourable to the Bill.

I was anxious to learn if there was any foundation for these rumours, and I wrote to Bright, asking him to give me an interview. He quickly sent the following reply:

Reform Club: May 28, 1886.

I expect to be here to-morrow from 12 to 2, and shall be glad to see you, if it be not inconvenient for you to call upon me.

I called at 12.30. He was sitting in the hall of the Club talking to Lord Hartington. I took a place opposite to them, and waited for about an hour. At the end of that time Mr. Bright looked at his watch, rose, said something (smiling) to Lord Hartington (who went away) and then walked across the hall to me.

'Well,' he said pleasantly, 'I have kept you waiting for an hour, but I have been talking about Ireland all the time. I came to the Club this morning at 10 o'clock, and I have talked of nothing but Ireland since. Come, sit down.'

I went straight to the point. To talk to Bright and not go straight to the point would be fatal. ‘ I have come, Mr. Bright,’ I said, ‘ to ask if you are in favour of the Home Rule Bill.’

He paused for a moment, looked on the floor, then raised his head and answered, ‘ I am not. Wait ’ (at a motion of my hand). ‘ I am against the Land Bill too ; I am against both Bills.’

‘ I am only interested in the Home Rule Bill, Mr. Bright. May I ask why you are against it ? Are you afraid that Home Rule would lead to religious persecution ? ’

‘ No ; the fact is the days of religious persecution are gone by. You cannot have it anywhere now. We are all watching each other too much. You know my views of the Irish. They are like most other people—neither better nor worse—and you are not going to have a condition of things in Ireland which is impossible anywhere else. Moreover, if the Irish were disposed to persecute, they would have to be on their good behaviour, living so near a Protestant country. Besides, the Protestants of Ireland are very well able to take care of themselves. I would have more concern for some of the poor Catholics. Remember that it is Catholics and not Protestants who have come under the harrow of the League.’ (A pause.) ‘ I think, though, that some of these fellows [the Irish members] are far too fond of talking of Ireland as a Catholic nation. They do harm.’ (A pause, and then a smile.) ‘ I expect that some of these fellows who talk about Ireland as a Catholic nation are precious bad Catholics. They remind me of the Pope’s brass band, Keogh and

Sadleir. I remember those times. You don't. But I have no fear of a religious persecution.'

'Then do you think that we would try to separate from England if we got an Irish Parliament?'

'Certainly not. How could you? Why, the thing is madness. Mark, there are people in this country who would be very glad if you would try. That would give them an opportunity of settling the Irish Question very quickly. Just think of our population and of yours; then your population is steadily diminishing, and ours always increasing. Separation is absurd. Whether you have a Parliament or not, you can never separate.' (A pause.) 'I do not know that separation would be a bad thing if you could separate far enough.'

I said, quoting a famous passage from one of his speeches, 'If we could be moved three thousand miles to the westward.'[1]

Bright (smiling). 'Just so. Many of us would be glad to be rid of you; but we have been thrown together by Nature, and so we must remain.' (A pause.) 'The history of the two countries is most melancholy. Here we are at the end of the nineteenth century, and we do not like each other a bit better. You are as rebellious as ever. I sometimes think that you hate us as much as ever.'

I interposed, 'It is a sad commentary, sir, on your government.'

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[1] 'But if the ancient lines are to be worked upon, and Ireland is to be by no means tranquillised and united to this country, then I can only wish—to use a simile I once before used in this House—that she could be unmoored from her fastenings in the deep, and moved three thousand miles to the west.'—House of Commons, March 24, 1884.

Bright (warmly). ‘I know our government has been as bad as a government could be, but then we have done many things during the past fifty years. You do not thank us in the least.’

I said, ‘Because, as you often pointed out, you have only yielded to force. The Irish tenants do not thank you for the Land Act of 1881. They thank Mr. Parnell and the Land League. Are they wrong?’

Bright. ‘Well, of course I know only too well how much truth there is in what you say about our policy in Ireland. But you do not recognise that there is an effort now being made in this country to do better by Ireland. If Mr. Gladstone, who has done so much for you, would only persevere on the old lines instead of taking this new step, we would yet make everything right in Ireland.’

I remarked, ‘Well, sir, I am glad that you think the new step will not lead to separation.’

Bright. ‘Oh no, I am not afraid of that.’

‘Do you think that the present Irish representatives would sit in an Irish Parliament, and that they would adopt a policy of public plunder?’

Bright. ‘Well, I have said to you already that the Irish are very much the same as other people, and no people in the world would stand these fellows permanently. No; if you had an Irish Parliament you would have a better class of men in it. I quite understand that. I do not mean to say that you would have a better representation at once, for these fellows would try to hold on. But the man who is their master would shake them off one by one, and the people would support him. Mr. Parnell is a remarkable man, but a bitter enemy of this country. He would have great difficulties in the first years of an Irish Parliament, but he might overcome them. Yet many of these fellows hate him' (smiling). 'The Irish hate all sort of government. He is a sort of Government.'

'A popular government?'

Bright. 'Well, perhaps so, but even that may not save him in the end. I do not know how long he will be able to control these fellows.'

'Well, Mr. Bright, you are not afraid of a religious persecution, nor separation, nor public plunder. Why do you object to Home Rule?'

Bright. 'I will tell you. I object to this Bill. It either goes too far or it does not go far enough. If you could persuade me that what you call Home Rule would be a good thing for Ireland, I would still object to this Bill. It does not go far enough. It would lead to friction—to constant friction between the two countries. The Irish Parliament would be constantly struggling to burst the bars of the statutory cage in which it is sought to confine it. Persuade me that Home Rule would be a good thing for Ireland and I would give you the widest measure possible, consistently with keeping up the connexion between the two countries.'

I asked, 'You would give us control of the land, police, judges?'

Bright. 'Certainly, I would give you a measure which would make it impossible for the two Parliaments to come into conflict. There is the danger. If you get only a half-hearted measure you will immediately ask for more. There would be renewed agitation—perhaps an attempt at insurrection—and in the end we should take away your Parliament, and probably make you a Crown colony.'

I said, 'Would you keep the Irish members in Westminster ?'

Bright. 'Certainly not. Why, the best clause in Mr. Gladstone's Bill is the one which excludes them.'

'If you were a Home Ruler, Mr. Bright, you would, in fact, give Ireland Colonial Home Rule ?'

Bright. 'I would give her a measure of Home Rule which should never bring her Parliament into close relation with the British Parliament. She should have control over everything which by the most liberal interpretation could be called Irish. I would either have trust or distrust. If I had trust, I would trust to the full ; if I had distrust, I would do nothing. But this is a halting Bill. If you establish an Irish Parliament give it plenty of work and plenty of responsibility. Throw the Irish upon themselves. Make them forget England ; let their energies be engaged in Irish party warfare ; but give no Irish party leader an opportunity of raising an anti-English cry. That is what a good Home Rule Bill ought to do. This Bill does not do it. Why, the Receiver-General appointed by it would alone keep alive the anti-English feeling. If you keep alive that feeling, what is the good of your Home Rule ? Mark, I am arguing this matter from your own point of view. But I do not think that Home Rule is necessary. Let us work on the old lines, but work more constantly and more vigorously. We have passed some good land laws. Well, let us pass more if necessary.'

I said, 'But will you?'

Bright. 'I think so. I think that the English people are now thoroughly aroused to the necessities of Ireland: they are beginning to understand the country, and the old system of delay and injustice will not be renewed. If Mr. Parnell would only apply himself to the removal of the practical grievances of Ireland, there is no "concession," as you call it, which he could not get from the Imperial Parliament. I have said that I am not afraid that Home Rule would lead to separation. We are too strong for that. But I think that there are certain men in Ireland who would make an effort to obtain separation. I mean what you call the Old Fenians. I saw a letter from one of those men a few days ago—he does not know I saw it—a very long letter. I was much interested in it. I should like to know what you are going to do with him. He is an upright, honourable man, ready, I can quite believe, to risk anything for his country. Now, he wants separation, and he wants to obtain it in regular warfare. He is mad, but a madman with a conscience is sometimes dangerous. I should think that he could appeal to the young men of the country, young fellows full of sentiment and enthusiasm'—(a pause)—'fools; but they might make themselves troublesome to your Irish Parliament. Now, what will you do with ——? Will he be content with an Irish Parliament of any sort?'

'Well, Mr. Bright, I am in a good position to answer that question. I saw —— last night. I asked him if he would accept an Irish Parliament and an Irish

Executive which would have the fullest control of Irish affairs—the connexion with England, of course, to be preserved.'

Bright. ' Yes ; and what did he say ? '

' He said, " I would take an oath of allegiance to an Irish Parliament ; I will never take it to an English Parliament. I would enter an Irish Parliament ; I would give it a fair trial—— " '

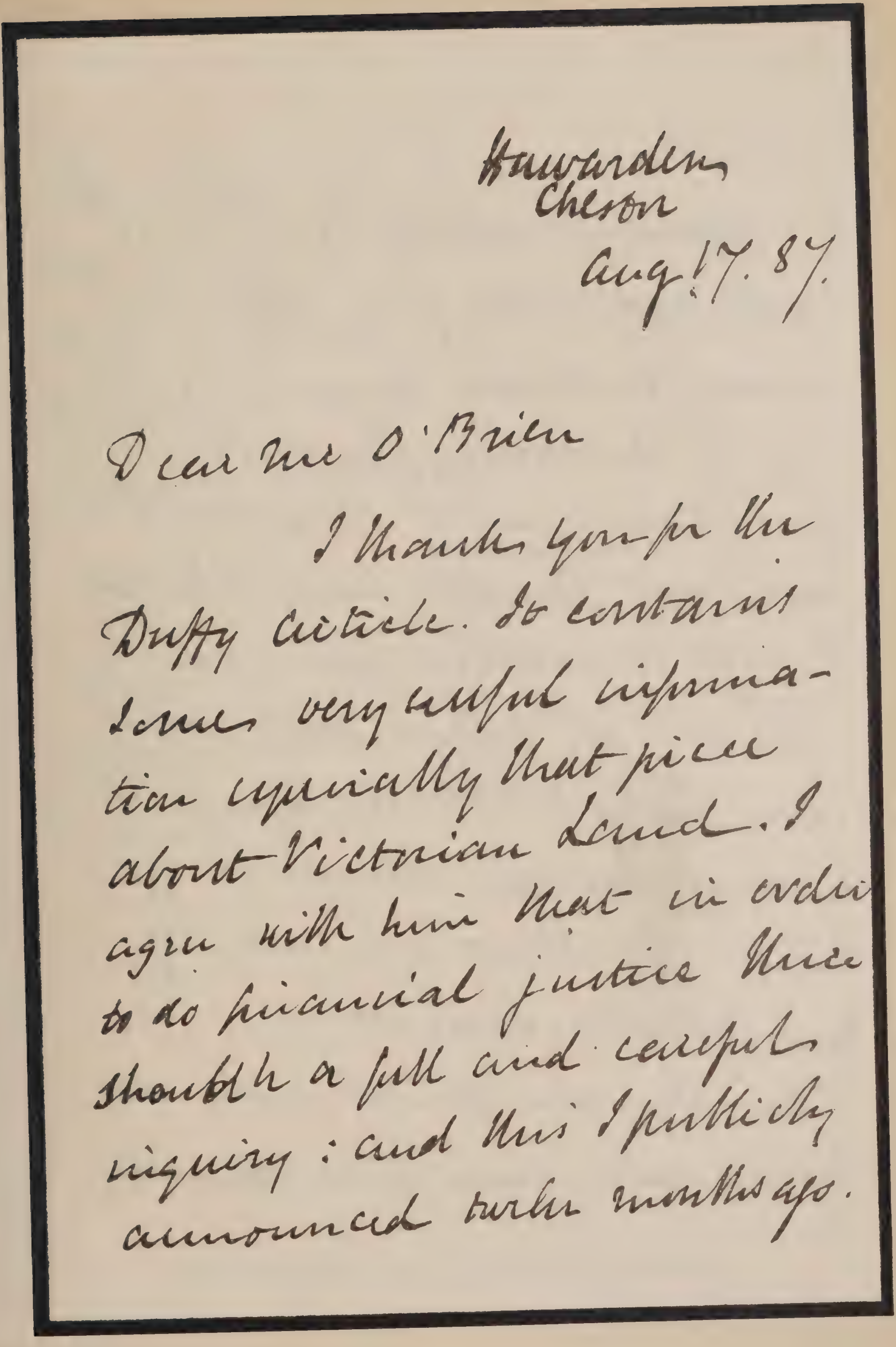
Bright. ' Well, you surprise me. This is certainly a new light. The man is quite honourable. He will do what he says. Well, but does your friend think that you will get a Home Rule Parliament ? '

' No ; he thinks that we are living in a fool's paradise, and that his turn will come again. Still, I fancy that he is somewhat astonished that an English Prime Minister should introduce any sort of Home Rule.'

Bright. ' So am I. So far your Old Fenian and I agree.'

We then parted. As I left the Club he said, ' Good-bye ; I wish I was on your side. I have been on the Irish side all my life, and now at the end of my life I do not like even to appear to be against you ; but I cannot vote for this Bill. I have not spoken against it. I do not know that I will speak against it, but'—(a pause)—' that is on account of Mr. Gladstone. My personal regard for him may prevent me from taking any part in the discussion.'

He said no more, and I came away. But his opposition to the Bill did not weaken the affectionate regard in which I had ever held him ; nor do I cherish his memory the less now because he was not on the Irish side in the memorable struggle of twenty-four years



Hawarden
Chester
Aug 17. 87.

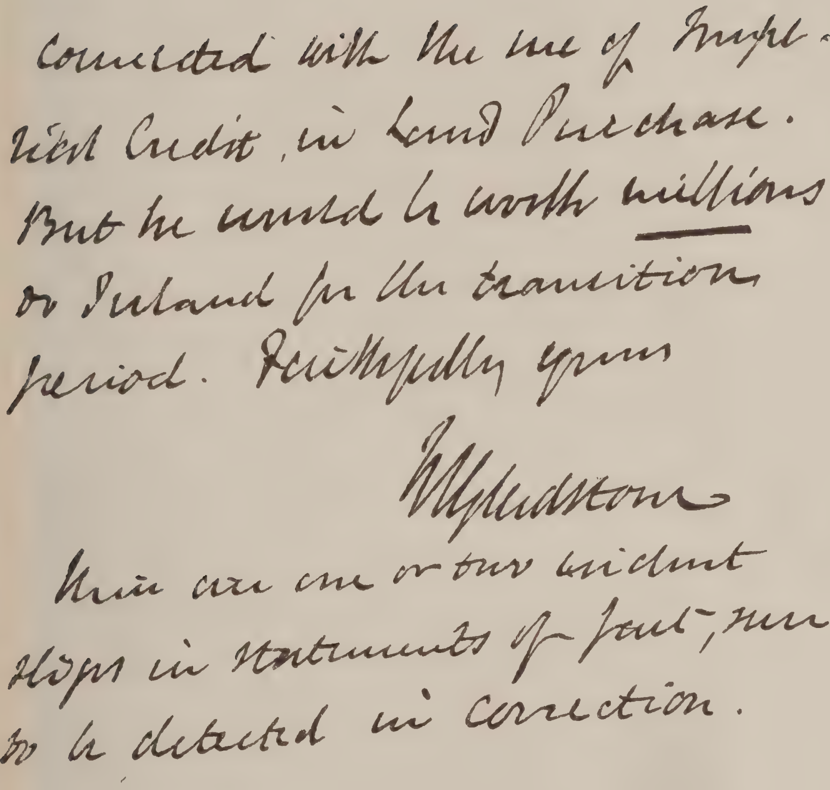
Dear Mr O'Brien

I thank you for the Duffy article. It contains some very useful information especially that piece about Victorian Land. I agree with him that in order to do financial justice there should be a full and careful inquiry: and this I publicly announced twelve months ago.

Upon the whole matter, I am extremely glad that an example should have been set of discussing the entire question *de novo* and apart from our plans: and I hope it will be largely followed.

As to Sir C. G. Duffy's particular ideas, what I should like to know is Parnell's estimate of them: for that is a man of remarkable insight.

The Receiver General may not be palatable, and he is especially



connected with the use of Imperial Credit, in Land Purchase. But he would be worth millions to Ireland for the transition period. Faithfully yours

W E Gladstone

There are one or two evident slips in statements of fact; sure to be detected in correction.

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ago. If he went wrong then, I cannot forget that for the best part of his public life Ireland had no stauncher friend in this country.[1]

NOTES TO CHAPTER V

A

In reference to Bright's allusion to the Receiver-General,[2] I may set out the following letter which I received from Mr. Gladstone in 1887. Sir Gavan Duffy had written an article on 'A Fair Constitution for Ireland,' and I sent it to Mr. Gladstone. He replied:

Hawarden, Chester: Aug. 17, '87.

DEAR MR. O'BRIEN,—I thank you for the Duffy article. It contained some very useful information, especially that piece about Victorian Land. I agree with him that in order to do financial justice there should be a full and careful inquiry; and this I publicly announced twelve months ago.

Upon the whole matter, I am extremely glad that an example should have been set of discussing the entire question *de novo* and apart from our plans; and I hope it will be largely followed.

As to Sir C. G. Duffy's particular ideas, what I should like to know is Parnell's estimate of them; for that is a man of remarkable insight.

The Receiver-General may not be palatable, and he is especially connected with the use of Imperial Credit in Land Purchase. But he would be worth *millions* to Ireland for the transition period.

Faithfully yours,

W. E. GLADSTONE.

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[1] See the *Life of Charles Stewart Parnell.*

[2] See *ante*, pp. 82 and 88.

B

I had a conversation with Mr. W. L. Bright about his father in November 1909. He said that with reference to Home Rule his father wrote to Mr. Chamberlain, saying in effect, that as the differences between Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Gladstone were so trivial, it would be better for Mr. Chamberlain and his friends not to vote against the second reading of the Bill, but to abstain from voting. Mr. Chamberlain sent the letter to Mr. W. S. Caine. Mr. W. S. Caine did not read the letter at the meeting of the Liberal Unionists, but conveyed to them the idea that Bright was against Home Rule—a statement which, of course, had a great effect on the meeting. Mr. W. L. Bright saw his father subsequently, and said to him, 'Well, you have decided the fate of Home Rule.' Bright asked what he meant, and Mr. W. L. Bright told him what Mr. Caine had said at the meeting. Bright then told his son what he had exactly written to Mr. Chamberlain. But the letter could not be produced because Mr. Caine had torn it up.

Bright did not object to his son being a Home Ruler. Mr. W. L. Bright said to him, 'Well, if you object to the course I am taking I shall leave Parliament. But if I remain there I must vote according to my conscience.' Bright told him not to leave Parliament, and to vote as he thought right.[1]

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[1] On this subject see Sir Henry Lucy's interesting book, *Sixty Years in the Wilderness.*

CHAPTER VI

THE CRIMEAN WAR

ONE day Bright was passing the Crimean Monument in Waterloo Place with a friend. Pointing to the word Crimea which is inscribed on the pedestal, he said, 'The last letter of that word ought to be the first.' Bright abhorred war. But he did not condemn the Crimean War on the principles of the Peace Society. He condemned it on grounds which Lord Palmerston, one of the authors of the war, could appreciate,—grounds of justice, wisdom and necessity.

Speaking in the House of Commons in March 1854, he said:

> I shall not discuss this question on the abstract principle of peace at any price, as it is termed, which is held by a small minority of persons in this country, founded on religious opinions which are not generally received, but I shall discuss it entirely on principles which are accepted by all the members of this House. I shall maintain that when we are deliberating on the question of war, and endeavouring to prove its justice or necessity, it becomes us to show that the interests of the country are clearly involved; that the objects for which the war is undertaken are probable, or, at least, possible, of attainment; and, further, that the end

proposed to be accomplished is worth the cost and the sacrifices which we are about to incur. I think these are fair principles on which to discuss the question, and I hope that when the noble lord the member for Tiverton [Lord Palmerston] rises during this debate, he will not assume that I have dealt with it on any other principles than these.

The Crimean War is a familiar story. First, there was the dispute about the Holy Places between France, claiming to protect the interests of the Latin Church, and Russia, claiming to protect the interests of the Greek Church. That dispute was satisfactorily settled by the Russian and English ambassadors at Constantinople in April 1853. But Russia demanded a treaty with Turkey for the protection of all persons belonging to the Greek Church in the Ottoman Empire. This, Russia contended, was only asking that she should exercise such a protectorate over the members of the Greek Church in the dominions of the Porte as France exercised in the case of Catholics and England in the case of Protestants. The Porte, supported by the English ambassador at Constantinople, refused to sign the treaty, whereupon the Russian ambassador left Turkey, and in June 1853 the Russians crossed the Pruth and occupied the Danubian Principalities 'as a guarantee for the protection of the Greek Christians.' In July the British and French fleets were ordered to Besika Bay. About the same time (July 24) the representatives of France, England, Prussia, and Austria met at Vienna and prepared what has been called the 'Vienna Note' for the settlement of the dispute between Russia and Turkey.

This Note was sent to Russia and accepted by the Czar. It was then sent to Turkey, when the Porte made certain amendments, which were accepted by the four Powers, but rejected by Russia. Returning to their original position, Austria and Prussia subsequently pressed the Porte once more to accept the 'Note'; but England and France took the contrary course, supporting the Porte in its refusal. Sir Spencer Walpole, in his 'History of England,' places the 'Vienna Note' and the Note as amended by the Porte side by side thus:

If [1] the Emperors of Russia have at all times evinced their active solicitude for the

maintenance of the immunities and privileges of the Orthodox Greek Church in the Ottoman Empire, the Sultans have never refused again to confirm them	Orthodox Greek religion and Church, the Sultans have never ceased to provide for the maintenance of the privileges and immunities which at different times they have spontaneously granted to that religion and to that Church in the Ottoman Empire, and to confirm them

by solemn acts testifying their ancient and constant benevolence towards their Christian subjects.

His Majesty the Sultan Abdul Medjid, now reigning, inspired with the same dispositions, and being desirous of giving to His Majesty the Emperor of Russia a personal proof of his most sincere friendship, has been solely influenced in his unbounded confidence in the eminent qualities of his august friend and ally, and has been pleased to take into serious consideration the representations which His Highness Prince Menschikoff conveyed to the Sublime Porte.

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[1] In the text the words occupying the whole width of the page are common to the Note both in its original and amended form. The words in the left column are in the original Note; the words in the right column are the Porte's amendment.

The undersigned has in consequence received orders to declare by the present note that the Government of His Majesty the Sultan will remain faithful to

the letter and to the spirit of the treaties of Kainardji and Adrianople relative to the protection of the Christian religion, and	the stipulations of the treaty of Kainardji, confirmed by that of Adrianople, relative to the protection by the Sublime Porte of the Christian religion, and he is moreover charged to make known

that His Majesty considers himself bound in honour to cause to be observed for ever, and to preserve from all prejudice either now or hereafter, the enjoyment of the spiritual privileges which have been granted by His Majesty's august ancestors to the Orthodox Eastern Church, which are maintained and confirmed by him; and moreover, in a spirit of exalted equity, to cause the Greek rite to share in the advantages granted

to the other Christian rites by convention or special arrangement.	or which might be granted to the other Christian communities, Ottoman subjects.

In September 1853 the English fleet was ordered from Besika Bay to the Bosphorus for the protection of Constantinople.[1] In October the English ambassador at Constantinople was authorised to summon the fleet if necessary from the Bosphorus to the Euxine. About the same time the Sultan sent an ultimatum to Russia calling upon her to evacuate the Principalities. Russia refused; whereupon Turkey declared war (October 5) and Turkish troops crossed the Danube and defeated the Russians in several engagements. In retaliation the Russian fleet issued from Sebastopol in November and destroyed the Turkish fleet at Sinope.[1]

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[1] The treaty of 1841 had strictly forbidden the Porte to admit, or other Powers to send, ships of war to the Bosphorus while Turkey was

England and France then decided that their fleets should not merely enter the Black Sea, but should 'invite' every Russian vessel found there to return to Sebastopol. Almost simultaneously with this decision another Note, pressed by the four Powers on the Sultan, was accepted by that potentate; but the Czar, indignant at the decision of France and England in ordering his ships out of the Black Sea, withdrew his ambassadors from Paris and London in January 1854, and in February the French and English ambassadors left St. Petersburg. On February 27 England and France sent an ultimatum to Russia summoning her to withdraw her troops from the Principalities. The Czar did not notice the ultimatum. On March 11 the

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at peace. The new policy, therefore, could only be justified by the assumption that Turkey was at war—Walpole, *History of England*, vol. v. p. 97.

[1] No Englishman had a right to complain that the Czar, after war had been declared against him, should have committed an act of war. If Englishmen, in fact, had enjoyed even a superficial acquaintance with their own history, they would have known that, forty-seven years before, their own ancestors had committed an act of much more doubtful propriety, which English historians always defend. Yet if the battle of Sinope were indefensible, the bombardment of Copenhagen in 1807 was an outrage.—*Ibid.*, p. 99.

English fleet sailed for the Baltic under the command of Sir Charles Napier. Prior to the departure of the fleet a dinner was given to Sir Charles Napier at the Reform Club. Lord Palmerston presided, and among the company was Sir James Graham, the First Lord of the Admiralty. There was a good deal of levity, and what Bright subsequently called 'buffoonery,' at the dinner. Napier and Graham, in particular, made undignified and blustering speeches. Napier said, 'I suppose we are very nearly at war, and probably, when I get into the Baltic, I'll have an opportunity of declaring war'—an announcement which was received with cries of 'Bravo, Charlie!' Sir James Graham said, 'My gallant friend says that when he goes into the Baltic he will declare war: I, as First Lord of the Admiralty, give him my free consent to do so.'

On March 13 Bright called the attention of the House of Commons to these speeches, asked Palmerston if he approved of them, and condemned the whole proceedings as grotesque and disgraceful. He said, 'I have read the proceedings of that banquet with pain and humiliation. The reckless levity displayed is, in my own opinion, discreditable to the grave and responsible statesmen of a civilised and Christian nation.'

Palmerston made a flippant reply, called Bright 'the honourable and *reverend* gentleman' (an epithet which brought upon him a dignified rebuke from Cobden), and treated the whole subject contemptuously. Macaulay (who was a great admirer of Palmerston) gives us his impression of the scene. He says:

> I went to the House on Monday, but for any pleasure I got I might as well have stayed away. I heard

Bright say everything that I thought; and I heard Palmerston and Graham expose themselves lamentably. Palmerston's want of temper, judgment, and good breeding was almost incredible. He did himself more harm in three minutes than all his enemies and detractors throughout the world have been able to do him in twenty years. I came home quite dispirited.[1]

On March 31, 1854, the Queen's message announcing the declaration of war by England was brought down to the House. Bright took part in the debate which ensued. He made a calm, dispassionate, closely reasoned, statesmanlike speech showing a thorough knowledge of the details of the negotiations which had led up to the war. He fastened at once on the Vienna Note, and said Turkey should have accepted it. It had been approved of by the four Powers; it had been accepted by Russia; it had been pressed on the Porte by the English ambassador at Constantinople; and the four Powers should have insisted on its acceptance by Turkey, or left her to face Russia single-handed.[2] On the contrary, they allowed themselves to be led by Turkey, and showed extraordinary weakness and vacillation. It was said that the war was undertaken to resuscitate Turkey. But Turkey could not be resuscitated. She was tottering to her fall, and that fall could not ultimately be averted. Russia was a growing Power, and no matter what the immediate result of the war might be, her advance could not finally be prevented. Whatever treaty might be made for the purpose of crippling her she would tear up when the opportunity came, as come it would. England had no interest in the war, and the advantages likely to be gained by it were in no wise commensurate with the loss of treasure and blood certain to be sacrificed in the struggle. So said Bright, but he spoke to deaf ears. The English people were bent on war; and Bright could only (as he bravely and nobly did) face the storm of rage and fury which were madly driving them into it. Meanwhile events were moving rapidly on the Continent. In May 1854 the Russians laid siege to Silistria, but were repulsed and compelled to retire from the Principalities. Then there was an opportunity for peace. The war had been immediately caused by Russia's refusal to evacuate the Principalities. Now she had been forced to retire. Had England and France been as much bent on peace as they were on war, this opportunity would have been seized by them to bring hostilities to an end. However, determined to humiliate and to cripple Russia, they proposed (in August 1854) terms which the Czar said he would only grant in the last extremity. These terms—called the Four Points—were:

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[1] Trevelyan, *Life of Macaulay*.

[2] Years afterwards a member of the British Cabinet (Lord John Russell) declared in his *Recollections* that, if he had been Prime Minister in 1853, he would have insisted on the acceptance of the Vienna Note. It is, unfortunately, certain that the man who penned this sentence in his old age gave very different advice to his colleagues in 1853. —Walpole, *History of England*, vol. v. p. 95.

1. That the Protectorate of Russia over the Danubian Principalities and Servia must cease;

2. That the navigation of the Danube at its mouth must be freed from all obstacles;

3. That the Treaty of July 1841 relating to the Black Sea and the Dardanelles,[1] must be revised in the interest of the balance of power in Europe; and

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[1] It gave Russia a preponderance in the Black Sea.

4. That the claim to any official Protectorate over Christian subjects of the Porte, of whatever rite, must be abandoned by the Czar.[1]

The war went on. In September 1854 the Allied armies landed in the Crimea. On the 20th the battle of the Alma was fought; on October 17 the siege of Sebastopol began; on October 25 the battle of Balaclava was fought. In the same month Bright was invited to a war meeting at Manchester. He replied (declining the invitation) in a famous letter addressed to Mr. Absolom Watkin, condemning the war and, *inter alia*, summing up the whole case in the following pithy sentences:

> [The Government,] in concert with France, Austria and Prussia, took the original dispute out of the hands of Russia and Turkey and formed themselves into a court of arbitration in the interests of Turkey; they made an award which they declared to be safe and honourable for both parties; this award was accepted by Russia and rejected by Turkey; and they then turned round upon their own award and declared it to be 'totally inadmissible,' and made war upon the very country whose Government, at their suggestion and urgent recommendation, had frankly accepted it.

On November 5 the battle of Inkerman was fought; and throughout the winter great hardships and sufferings, aggravated by the incompetence of the authorities to grapple with the situation, fell upon the English army. In December Parliament met, and there was a general outcry in the country and in the Press against the mismanagement of the war by the Government. On December 22, 1854, Bright made a famous speech in the House of Commons, full of passion and eloquence and bold denunciation of the Ministry. His description of Russell and Palmerston is excellent. The following passage is a specimen of delicate humour and refined ridicule. He said:

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[1] Summarised in Fyffe's *History of Modern Europe*, vol. iii. p. 209.

> When terrible calamities were coming upon your army, where was this Government? One Minister was in Scotland, another at the seaside, and for six weeks no meeting of the Cabinet took place. I do not note when Cabinets are held—I sometimes observe that they sit for four or five hours at a time, and then I think something is wrong—but for six weeks, or two months, it is said, no meeting of the Ministers was held. The noble Lord President [Russell] was making a small speech on a great subject somewhere in Cumberland. At Bedford he descanted on the fate of empires, forgetting that there was nothing so likely to destroy an empire as unnecessary wars. At Bristol he was advocating a new History of England, which, if impartially written, I know not how the noble lord's policy for the last few months will show to posterity. The noble lord the member for Tiverton [Palmerston] undertook a more difficult task—a labour left unaccomplished by Voltaire—and, when he addressed the Hampshire peasantry, in one short sentence did he overturn the New Testament and destroy the foundations of the Christian religion.

The peroration was marked by deep feeling and indignant remonstrance, expressed in language most galling and at the same time courteous and dignified:

> When I look at gentlemen on that Bench, and consider all their policy has brought about within the last twelve months, I scarcely dare trust myself to speak of them, either in or out of their presence. We all know what we have lost in this House. Here, sitting

near me, very often sat the member for Frome [Colonel Boyle]. I met him, a short time before he went out, at Mr. Westerton's, the bookseller, near Hyde Park Corner. I asked him whether he was going out. He answered he was afraid he was ; not afraid in the sense of personal fear—he knew not that ; but he said, with a look and a tone I shall never forget, ' It is no light matter for a man who has a wife and five little children.' The stormy Euxine is his grave ; his wife is a widow, his children fatherless. On the other side of the House sat a member, with whom I was not acquainted, who has lost his life, and another of whom I knew something [Colonel Blair]. Who is there that does not recollect his frank, amiable, and manly countenance ? I doubt whether there were any men on either side of the House who were more capable of fixing the goodwill and affection of those with whom they were associated. Well, but the place that knew them shall know them no more for ever.

I have specified only two ; but there are a hundred officers who have been killed in battle, or who have died of their wounds ; forty have died of disease ; and more than two hundred others have been wounded more or less severely. This has been a terribly destructive war to officers. They have been, as one would have expected them to be, the first in valour as the first in place ; they have suffered more in proportion to their numbers than the commonest soldiers in the ranks. This has spread sorrow over the whole country. I was in the House of Lords when the vote of thanks was moved. In the gallery were many ladies, three-fourths of whom were dressed in the deepest mourning. Is this nothing ? And, in every village, cottages are to be found into which sorrow has entered, and, as I believe, through the policy of the Ministry, which might have been avoided. No one supposes that the Government wished to spread the pall of sorrow over the land ;

but this we had a right to expect, that they would at least show becoming gravity in discussing a subject the appalling consequences of which may come home to individuals and to the nation. I recollect when Sir Robert Peel addressed the House on a dispute which threatened hostilities with the United States—I recollect the gravity of his countenance, the solemnity of his tone, his whole demeanour showing that he felt in his soul the responsibility that rested on him.

I have seen this, and I have seen the present Ministry. There was the buffoonery at the Reform Club. Was that becoming a matter of this grave nature? Has there been a solemnity of manner in the speeches heard in connexion with this war, and have Ministers shown themselves statesmen and Christian men when speaking on a subject of this nature? It is very easy for the noble lord the member for Tiverton to rise and say that I am against war under all circumstances, and that if an enemy were to land on our shores I should make a calculation as to whether it would be cheaper to take him in or keep him out, and that my opinion on this question is not to be considered either by Parliament or the country. I am not afraid of discussing the war with the noble lord on his own principles. I understand the Blue Books as well as he; and, leaving out all fantastic and visionary notions about what will become of us if something is not done to destroy or to cripple Russia, I say—and I say it with as much confidence as I ever said anything in my life—that the war cannot be justified out of these documents; and that impartial history will teach this to posterity if we do not comprehend it now.

I am not, nor did I ever pretend to be, a statesman; and that character is so tainted and so equivocal in our day, that I am not sure that a pure and honourable ambition would aspire to it. I have not enjoyed for thirty years, like these noble lords, the honours and emoluments of office. I have not set my sails to every passing breeze. I am a plain and simple citizen, sent here by one of the foremost constituencies of the Empire, representing feebly, perhaps, but honestly, I dare aver, the opinions of very many, and the true interests of all those who have sent me here. Let it not be said that I am alone in my condemnation of this war, and of this incapable and guilty administration. And, even if I were alone, if mine were a solitary voice, raised amid the din of arms and the clamours of a venal Press, I should have the consolation I have to-night—and which I trust will be mine to the last moment of my existence—the priceless consolation that no word of mine has tended to promote the squandering of my country's treasure or the spilling of one single drop of my country's blood.

In January 1855 Mr. Roebuck moved for a committee to inquire into the condition of the Army and the conduct of the war. The motion was carried by a majority of 157 votes, whereupon Lord Aberdeen resigned and Lord Palmerston became Prime Minister. In February the Czar Nicholas died and was succeeded by Alexander II. Alexander wished for peace, and expressed his willingness (Nicholas indeed had done the same thing some short time before his death) to consider the question on the basis of the Four Points.[1] It was agreed between France, England, Russia, and Austria that a conference on the subject should be held at Vienna in March; and Lord John Russell was sent as the English envoy to this conference. While negotiations for peace were in the air, Bright addressed the House of Commons in one of the shortest and, I think, one of the most beautiful speeches he ever delivered. It was couched in amicable terms. He did not criticise the war; he did not attack the Ministry; he simply appealed earnestly to Lord Palmerston to use the opportunity which offered itself by the proposed negotiations at Vienna for the sole purpose of stopping the war on honourable and reasonable terms. It has sometimes been said that Bright was not an effective extempore speaker. This is not true. In dealing with interruptions his extempore outbursts were magnificent. I shall give an illustration from this speech of February 23, 1855. He asked Lord Palmerston if Lord John Russell had power to enter into an armistice if the circumstances justified this step. He said:

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[1] *Ante*, pp. 100 and 101.

> I should like to ask the noble lord at the head of the Government—although I am not sure if he will feel that he can or ought to answer the question—whether the noble lord the member for London has power, after discussions have commenced, and as soon as there shall be established good grounds for believing that the negotiations for peace will prove successful, to enter into any armistice?

At this point an honourable member said, 'No, No!' Bright's reply was like the roar of a lion irritated by the growl of some contemptible denizen of the forest:

> I know not, sir, who it is that says, 'No, no,' but I should like to see any man get up and say that the destruction of 200,000 human lives lost on all sides during the course of this unhappy conflict is not a sufficient sacrifice. You are not pretending to conquer territory—you are not pretending to hold fortified or unfortified towns; you have offered terms of peace

which, as I understand them, I do not say are not moderate ; and breathes there a man in this House or in this country whose appetite for blood is so insatiable that, even when terms of peace have been offered and accepted, he pines for that assault in which of Russian, Turk, French, and English, as sure as one man dies, 20,000 corpses will strew the streets of Sebastopol ?

It is in the peroration of this speech that the memorable reference to the Angel of Death occurs:

I cannot but notice, in speaking to gentlemen who sit on either side of this House, or in speaking to any one I meet, between this House and any of those localities we frequent when this House is up—I cannot, I say, but notice that an uneasy feeling exists as to the news which may arrive by the very next mail from the East. I do not suppose that your troops are to be beaten in actual conflict with the foe, or that they will be driven into the sea ; but I am certain that many homes in England in which there now exists a fond hope that the distant one may return—many such homes may be rendered desolate when the next mail shall arrive. The Angel of Death has been abroad throughout the land ; you may almost hear the beating of his wings. There is no one, as when the first-born were slain of old, to sprinkle with blood the lintel and the two side-posts of our doors, that he may spare and pass on ; he takes his victims from the castle of the noble, the mansion of the wealthy and the cottage of the poor and the lowly, and it is on behalf of all these classes that I make this solemn appeal.

I tell the noble lord that, if he be ready honestly and frankly to endeavour, by the negotiations about to be opened at Vienna, to put an end to this war, no word of mine, no vote of mine, will be given to shake his power for one single moment, or to change his position in this House. I am sure that the noble lord is not inaccessible to appeals made to him from honest motives and with no unfriendly feeling. The noble lord has been for more than forty years a member of this House. Before I was born he sat upon the Treasury Bench, and he has spent his life in the service of his country. He is no longer young, and his life has extended almost to the term allotted to man. I would ask, I would entreat, the noble lord to take a course which, when he looks back upon his whole political career—whatever he may therein find to be pleased with, whatever to regret—cannot but be a source of gratification to him. By adopting that course he would have the satisfaction of reflecting that, having obtained the object of his laudable ambition—having become the foremost subject of the Crown, the director of, it may be, the destinies of his country, and the presiding genius in her councils—he had achieved a still higher and nobler ambition : that he had returned the sword to the scabbard—that at his word torrents of blood had ceased to flow—that he had restored tranquillity to Europe, and saved this country from the indescribable calamities of war.

The conference met in March. The Powers agreed to the first two of the Four Points, but differed hopelessly on the third. Russia was willing that her preponderance in the Black Sea, established by the treaty of 1841, should cease ; but this was not enough for England and France, who wished to humiliate and cripple their enemy. They insisted that the Russian fleet in the Black Sea should be limited to six ships. Russia objected to this indignity, but suggested, as a counter-proposal, that the Bosphorus and Dardanelles should be open to ships of war of all nations. The Austrian ambassador then suggested as a compromise that any addition made by Russia to her fleet in the Black Sea should be followed by the admission of a corresponding number of war vessels belonging to the Allies, and that the integrity of Turkey should be guaranteed by Austria and the Western Powers. But though this proposal was privately favoured by the English and French envoys, their respective Governments, bent, as I have said, on humiliating and crippling Russia, would be satisfied with nothing less than the limitation of her fleet in the Euxine. So the conference came to an end and the war went on.[1]

Bright considered that Russia's proposals were reasonable and ought to have been accepted. He said that the attempt to limit her fleet in the Black Sea was the same in principle 'as if she were asked to limit the amount of her force in the Crimea to four or six regiments.' He regarded the policy of crippling Russia as hopeless, and said in effect that though she might be defeated for a time, she could not be permanently weakened and humbled. He said:

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[1] 'Drouyn de Lhuys, who personally conducted the negotiations on the part of France, and Russell, who represented England, both declared that Buol's alternative was outside their instructions, and that they were consequently unable to accept it; but both of them privately expressed to Buol their readiness to support it, and both undertook to go home and recommend its adoption to their respective Governments. The Emperor of France and the Cabinet of England concurred, however, in disagreeing with their plenipotentiaries, and the alternative was consequently rejected. Upon its rejection, Drouyn de Lhuys at once resigned the office he held in the Emperor's Ministry. On the other hand, Russell remained in the Ministry and, without disclosing the opinion which he had formed at Vienna, made a violent speech in favour of the prosecution of the war. Such a course naturally provoked the Austrian minister to disclose the language which Russell had held at Vienna. Charged with it, Russell had no excuse to offer, except the inconvenience which he thought would be involved by his own resignation. But the excuse was not suffered to remain in force. The Press denounced his conduct; Bulwer Lytton, giving expression to the public verdict, gave notice of a motion censuring his position as well as his policy; and Russell, bending before the storm, retired from the Ministry.'—Walpole, *History of England*, vol. v. pp. 136–7.

> Some honourable gentlemen talk as if Russia were a Power which you could take to Bow Street and bind over before some stipendiary magistrate to keep the peace for six months. Russia is a great Power, as England is, and in treating with her you must consider that the Russian Government has to consult its own dignity, its own interests and public opinion, just as much at least as the Government of this country.

But Bright struggled in vain to stem the torrent of passion and prejudice which had swept the English people into war and was still carrying them forward on a warlike course. At length Sebastopol fell on September 9, 1855, and negotiations for peace were shortly afterwards opened. The treaty of peace was finally signed at Paris on March 30, 1856. By the treaty—

1. The Black Sea was neutralised and closed against war vessels of all nations, though open to the mercantile marine of every nation. No arsenals were to be established on its coasts.

2. Free navigation of the Danube was established; Russia gave up a portion of Bessarabia, and accepted a frontier which excluded her from the river. Russia and Turkey gave up the conquests which each had made in Asia Minor during the war.

3. The Sultan was to issue a firman for the amelioration of his Christian subjects; but this firman gave no

right to any Power to interfere in the internal affairs of the Ottoman Empire.

Early in 1856 Bright's health broke down and he was obliged to retire for a time from public life. He visited the Continent. While there he met the widow of the Emperor Nicholas. She thanked him for doing justice to her country. He said he had tried to do justice to her country and to his own. There was a general election in 1857, and so unpopular had Bright's opposition to the Crimean War made him, that he lost his seat for Manchester; he was indeed left at the bottom of the poll. Lord Palmerston had triumphed all along the line; but the day of Bright's vindication was not far distant. He had said that whatever treaty Russia might be forced to make, in the moment of defeat, she would tear it up when the opportunity came, as come it would. The opportunity did come in 1870. In that year France was humbled to the dust by Prussia; and Russia at once declared that she would no longer observe the Treaty of Paris. In January 1871 the signatories to the treaty met in London and abrogated the Black Sea clauses. The Black Sea became once more a 'Russian lake,' with ships of war and fortresses and dockyards and arsenals. Sebastopol rose from its ashes. Everything for which England had fought, squandered her treasure and wasted the blood of her soldiers, was lost. A few years later war broke out again between Russia and Turkey. Turkey was beaten to the ground. By the Treaty of Berlin (July 1878), which terminated the war, Russia received back Bessarabia and obtained besides the districts of Ardahan, Kars, and Batoum in Asia. Turkey was, besides, stripped of much territory, out of which independent or semi-independent States were carved.[1] The folly (Bright would have said the wickedness) of Palmerston in plunging England into the Crimean War was finally demonstrated. The vindication of Bright was complete.

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[1] The Provisions of the Treaty are well summarised in *English Political History* by Messrs. Acland and Ransome.

By the Treaty of Berlin—

1. Bulgaria, north of the Balkans, was constituted an independent, autonomous, and tributary principality;
2. Bulgaria, south of the Balkans (Eastern Roumelia), was retained under the direct rule of the Porte, but was granted administrative autonomy;
3. The Porte retained the right of garrisoning the frontiers of Eastern Roumelia, but with regular troops only;
4. The Porte agreed to apply to Crete the organic law of 1868;
5. Montenegro was declared independent, and the seaport of Antivari was allotted to it;
6. Servia was declared independent, and received an accession of territory;
7. Roumania was declared independent, and received some islands in the Danube in exchange for Bessarabia;
8. Kars, Batoum, and Ardahan were ceded to Russia;
9. The Porte undertook to carry out without further delay the reforms required in Armenia;
10. In the event of the Greeks and the Porte not being able to agree upon a suggested rectification of frontier, the Powers reserved to themselves the right of offering their mediation.

CHAPTER VII

INDIA

JOHN BRIGHT did not care for popularity. He was ever ready to defy the public opinion of his own country in advocating what he believed to be the cause of righteousness. He pleaded for Ireland when to be her champion was to incur odium and almost disgrace in England. He denounced the Crimean War, and feared not, in so doing, to expose himself to the charge of befriending the enemies of his country.

In the case of India, as in the cases of Ireland and the Crimea, his sole aim was to find out the right path and to follow it whatever might happen. Bright's sympathies were with the native population of India. He thought that the money spent on wars would have been better employed in educating the people and in improving their social condition. He condemned the dual system of administration by the Board of Control and the East India Company, and said that both bodies should be swept away and the administration of the country transferred to the Crown.[1] There were persons who were of opinion that the Board of Control was to blame for all that was wrong in the Indian Government; that the Company made and collected the revenue; and that the Board spent it in unnecessary wars. But Bright said:

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[1] The East India Company received its first royal charter in 1600. The first important Act regulating its administration in India was passed in 1773. 'By that Statute the Governor of Bengal was

> I have never defended the Board of Control. I believe everything the East India Company has said of the Board of Control—to its discredit; and I believe that everything the Board of Control has said to the discredit of the East India Company to be perfectly true.

He considered that the natives should be admitted

raised to the rank of Governor-General; and, in conjunction with his Council of four members, he was entrusted with the duty of controlling the Governments of Madras and Bombay, so far as regarded questions of peace and war: a Supreme Court of Judicature was appointed at Calcutta, to which the judges were nominated by the Crown; and a power of making rules and regulations was conferred upon the Governor-General and his Council.'—Hunter, *Brief History of the Indian Peoples*, p. 227.

So much for the government in India.

'The Company's home government [prior to 1784] consisted' of the Court of Directors and the Court of Proprietors.

'In 1784 a third body was created by Pitt's India Bill—namely, the Board of Control. This Board consisted 'at first of Privy Councillors, nominated by the King, to the number of six, and of the Secretaries of State and Chancellor of the Exchequer, in virtue of their office. The limitation to the Privy Council for a choice of members was removed nine years later. The President transacts the business on ordinary occasions; and his business is to superintend the political and territorial transactions of the Company (who were then less a political than a commercial body), to overlook all the correspondence on those subjects, and, if necessary, to overrule the proceedings of the Directors. As a compensation for this, the Court of Proprietors could not interfere when the Government and the Directors were agreed. The salaries and other expenses of the Board of Control were to be paid by the Company.' —Martineau, *British Rule in India*, p. 158.

Such, in brief, was the dual government to which Bright objected.

See, generally, Lyall, *British Dominion in India*.

to the public service and should be educated with that view; and, generally, he felt that the administration of the country should be so carried on as to satisfy the people that the English held India, not for the purpose of aggression and aggrandisement, but to promote the well-being of the countless millions whom destiny had delivered into their hands. The policy of the future, in his opinion, should be directed, not to the acquisition of new territories, but to the good government of the vast possessions already acquired.

Bright always felt deeply pained in reading stories about the ill-treatment of natives by English officials. Upon one occasion he read to the House of Commons the following story told by Dr. Russell, the famous correspondent of the *Times*:

> I went off to breakfast in a small mosque, which has been turned into a *salle à manger* by some officers stationed here, and I confess I should have eaten with more satisfaction had I not seen, as I entered the enclosure of the mosque, a native badly wounded on a charpoy, by which was sitting a woman in deep affliction. The explanation given of this scene was, that '—— [the name of the Englishman was left blank] had been licking two of his bearers (or servants), and had nearly murdered them.' This was one of the servants, and, without knowing or caring to know the causes of such chastisement, I cannot but express my disgust at the severity—to call it by no harsher name—of some of our fellow-countrymen towards their domestics.

Commenting upon this statement, Bright said:

> The reading of that paragraph gave me extreme pain. People may fancy that this does not matter much; but I say it matters very much. Under any

system of Government you will have Englishmen scattered all over India, and conduct like that I have just described, in any district, must create ill feeling towards England, to your rule, to your supremacy, and when that feeling has become sufficiently extensive, any little accident may give fire to the train, and you may have calamities more or less serious, such as we have had during the last twelve months. You must change all this if you mean to keep India.'

Upon another occasion he read the following extract (written after the Mutiny) from an English paper (*The Englishman*), published in Calcutta:

> There is no necessity to bring every Sepoy to a court-martial, and convict him of mutinous intentions before putting him down as guilty. We do not advocate extreme or harsh measures, nor are we of those who would drench the land with blood; but we have no hesitation in saying, that, were the Government to order the execution of all these Sepoys, they would be legally and morally justified in doing so. There would be no injustice done.

' "No injustice," ' exclaimed Bright, ' "would be done"! I ask the House to consider that these men have committed no offence; their military functions were suspended because it was thought they were likely to be tempted to commit an offence, and therefore their arms were taken from them; and now an Englishman—one of your own countrymen—writing in a newspaper published in Calcutta, utters sentiments so atrocious as those which I have just read to the House.'

He strongly condemned the insolence of English officials, high and low, to natives of every grade.

'Only think,' he once said in the House of Commons, 'of a Governor-General of India writing to an Indian

Prince, the ruler over many millions of men in the heart of India, " Remember you are but as the dust under my feet." Passages like these are left out of despatches, when laid on the table of the House of Commons : it would not do for the Parliament or the Crown, or the people of England to know that their officer addressed language like this to a Native Prince!'

There were men in India and in England (after the Mutiny) who clamoured for blood. Bright pleaded for justice and mercy. In a noble passage delivered in the House of Commons in 1859, he said :

> Look at your responsibilities. India is ruled by Englishmen, but remember that in that unfortunate country you have destroyed every form of government but your own ; that you have cast the thrones of the natives to the ground. Princely families, once the rulers of India, are now either houseless wanderers in the land they once called their own, or are pensioners on the bounty of those strangers by whom their fortunes have been overthrown. They who were noble and gentle for ages are now merged in the common mass of the people. All over those vast regions there are countless millions, helpless and defenceless, deprived of their natural leaders and their ancient chiefs, looking with only some small ray of hope to that omnipresent and irresistible Power by which they have been subjected. I appeal to you on behalf of that people. I have besought your mercy and your justice for many a year past ; and if I speak to you earnestly now, it is because the object for which I plead is dear to my heart. Is it not possible to touch a chord in the hearts of Englishmen, to raise them to a sense of the miseries inflicted on that unhappy country by the crimes and the blunders of our rulers here ?

Bright was opposed to the presence of a big army in India. A big army, he said, implied the maintenance of English authority by force, and he wished that that authority should be maintained by the free consent of a loyal population. The loyalty of the Indian people could be secured by a policy of justice and conciliation. They were the most docile and governable people in the world. Add to their comfort, happiness, and prosperity; respect their political opinions and religious convictions; tolerate their customs, prejudices, and superstitions, and they would willingly accept the rule of England. 'They do not like us,' he declared, 'but they know not where to turn if we go.' It rested with the English themselves to make a loyal or disloyal India. If the English policy were based on plunder and insult, then India would always be in a state of smothered revolt. If it were based on respect for Indian sentiment and the recognition of Indian claims, with a sincere desire to advance the welfare of the Indian nations, then there would be peace and contentment in the land. He once gave an illustration of the kind of conduct which was very likely to set Indian feeling against England. He said:

> I would proclaim to the people of India that we would hold sacred that right of adoption which has prevailed for centuries in that country. It was only the other day that I had laid before me the case of a native prince who has been most faithful to England during these latter trials. When he came to the throne at ten years of age he was made to sign a document, by which he agreed that if he had no children his territories should be at the disposal of the British Government, or what was called the paramount Power. He has been married; he has had one son and two or three

daughters; but within the last few weeks his only son has died. There is grief in the palace, and there is consternation among the people, for the fact of this agreement entered into by the boy of ten years old is well known to all the inhabitants of the country. Representations have already been made to this country in the hope that the Government will cancel that agreement and allow the people of that State to know that the right of adoption would not be taken from their Prince in case he should have no other son. Let the Government do that, and there is not a corner of India into which that intelligence would not penetrate with the rapidity of lightning.

Bright condemned the policy of the Board of Control and the East India Company as fatal alike to the best interests of India and of England. It was a policy of constant wars, of incessant annexation, and of absolute neglect of the people who were subjected to English rule. He said:

> The people of India are in a state of poverty, and of decay unexampled in the annals of the country under their native rulers. From their poverty the Government wrings a gross revenue of more than £29,000,000 sterling, and out of that £29,000,000 returns to them £66,000 per annum for the purposes of education!

It was characteristic of Bright that he should say something about the English ecclesiastical system in India.

> What is our ecclesiastical establishment in India? Three bishops and a proportionate number of clergy, costing no less than £101,000 a year for the sole use of between 50,000 and 60,000 Europeans, nearly one-half of whom, moreover—taking the Army—are Roman Catholics. I might add that in India the

> Government showed the same discrimination of which the noble member for the City of London [Lord J. Russell] seemed to approve so much the other night, for, although they give to one Protestant bishop £4000 a year, with £1200 a year more for expenses and a ship at his disposal, and to two other Protestant bishops between £2000 and £3000 a year, they give to the Roman Catholic bishop a paltry sum of about £250 a year. The East India Company are not, perhaps, herein so much to blame, seeing that they do but follow the example of what is going on in this country.

Upon one occasion, whilst speaking on Indian affairs, a member of the House of Commons said to Bright, 'Produce your own plan.' Bright retorted :

> An hon. gentleman has asked me to produce my plan. I will not comply with that request, but will follow the example of a right hon. gentleman, a great authority in this House, who once said, when similarly challenged, that he should produce his plan when he was called in.

This was said in 1853 ; but as a matter of fact Bright did produce his own plan in 1858 when the territories and powers of the East India Company were transferred to the Crown of England—a change he had always advocated—when the Board of Control was abolished, and the administration of India was placed in the hands of a Secretary of State assisted by a council of fifteen. The title of Viceroy was substituted for the old title of Governor-General.[1] The Act which made this change

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[1] 'By the Indian Councils Act (1861) the Governor-General's Council, and also the Councils at Madras and Bombay, were augmented by the addition of non-official members, either Natives or Europeans, for legislative purposes only ; and by another Act passed in the same

(originally introduced by Lord Palmerston) was carried into law by the Government of Lord Derby. Bright spoke on the second reading of the Bill. Lord Granville, writing, after the debate, to Lord Canning, the Governor-General, said:

> Stanley introduced the second reading of the third Bill for India last night. I am told that he did it well. Bright made a remarkable speech, more than I thought his brain would have allowed. He omitted the question before the House, but went into the whole subject of India. His plan is to divide the Indian Empire into so many distinct Presidencies.

I shall state Bright's plan in Bright's words:

> I would propose that, instead of having a Governor-General and an Indian Empire, we should have neither the one nor the other. I would propose that we should have Presidencies, and not an Empire. If I were a Minister—which the House will admit is a bold figure of speech—and if the House were to agree with me, which is also an essential point—I would propose to have at least five Presidencies in India, and I would have the governments of those Presidencies perfectly equal in rank and in salary. The capitals of those Presidencies would probably be Calcutta, Madras, Bombay, Agra, and Lahore. I will take the Presidency of Madras as an illustration. Madras has a population of some 20,000,000. We all know its position on the map, and that it has the advantage of being more compact, geographically speaking, than the other Presidencies. It has a governor and a council. I would give to it a governor and a council still, but would confine all their duties to the Presidency of

year, High Courts of Judicature were constituted out of the old Supreme Courts at the Presidency towns.'—Hunter.

Madras, and I would treat it just as if Madras was the only portion of India connected with this country. I would have its finance, its taxation, its justice, and its police departments, as well as its public works and military departments, precisely the same as if it were a State having no connexion with any other part of India, and recognised only as a dependency of this country. I would propose that the Government of every Presidency should correspond with the Secretary for India in England, and that there should be telegraphic communication between all the Presidencies in India, as I hope before long to see a telegraphic communication between the office of the noble lord [Lord Stanley] and every Presidency over which he presides. I shall no doubt be told that there are insuperable difficulties in the way of such an arrangement, and I shall be sure to hear of the military difficulty. Now, I do not profess to be an authority on military affairs, but I know that military men often make great mistakes. I would have the army divided, each Presidency having its own army, just as now, care being taken to have them kept distinct; and I see no danger of any confusion or misunderstanding, when an emergency arose, in having them all brought together to carry out the views of the Government. There is one question which it is important to bear in mind, and that is with regard to the councils in India. I think every Governor of a Presidency should have an assistant council, but differently constituted from what they are now. I would have an open council. . . . What we want is to make the governments of the Presidencies governments for the people of the Presidencies; not governments for the civil servants of the Crown, but for the non-official mercantile classes from England who settle there, and for the 20,000,000 or 30,000,000 of natives in each Presidency.'[1]

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[1] House of Commons, June 24, 1858.

In 1859 he returned to the subject, and in the course of his speech condemned the expenditure of the Indian administration :

> I do not in the least agree with the Secretary for India when he says that the gentlemen of the Civil Service in that country are not overpaid. Every one knows that they are overpaid. Except some very high-salaried bishops of whom we have heard, no men are so grossly overpaid as the officials of the Civil Service in India. The proof of this may be found everywhere. Look at the island of Ceylon ; there the duties are as arduous and the climate as unfavourable as in India ; yet the Government does not pay its officials there more than one-half or two-thirds of the salaries they are paid in India. There are in India itself many hundreds of Europeans, the officers of the Indian army, all the Indian clergy, and missionaries ; there are also English merchants, carrying on their business at rates of profit not much exceeding the profits made in this country. But the Civil Service of the Indian Government, like everything privileged and exclusive, is a pampered body ; and, notwithstanding it has produced some few able men who have worthily done their duty, I do not think the Civil Service of India deserves the loud praise we have so frequently heard awarded to it by speakers in this House.[1]

He reverted to his old plan of establishing Presidencies and ' Open Councils ' :

> There has been no real improvement since I have sat in Parliament in the government of India, and I believe the Bill of last year is not one whit better for purposes of administration than any that has gone before. But I would suggest to the right hon. gentleman whether it would not be a good thing to bring in

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[1] House of Commons, August 1, 1859.

a Bill to extend and define the powers of the Governors of the various Presidencies in India? I do not ask the right hon. gentlemen to turn out the fifteen gentlemen who assist him in Leadenhall Street to vegetate on their pensions, but I ask him to go to India and to take the Presidency of Madras for an instance. Let arrangements be made by which that Presidency shall be in a position to correspond directly with him in this country, and let everyone connected with that Government of Madras feel that, with regard to the interests and the people of that Presidency, they will be responsible for their protection. At present there is no sort of tie between the governors and governed. Why is it that we should not do for Madras what has been done for the island of Ceylon? I am not about to set up the Council of Ceylon as a model institution; it is far from that, but I will tell you what it is, and you will see that it would not be a difficult thing to make the change I propose. The other day I asked a gentleman holding an office in the Government, and who had lived some years in Ceylon, what was the state of the Council? He said it was composed of sixteen members, of whom six were non-official and independent, and the Governors had always a majority. He added that at the present moment in that Council there was one gentleman, a pure Cingalese by birth and blood, another a Brahmin, another a half-caste whose father was a Dutchman and whose mother was a native, and three others who were either English merchants or planters. The Council has not much *prestige*, and therefore it is not easy to induce merchants in the interior to be members and to undertake its moderate duties; but the result is that this Cingalese, this Brahmin, this half-caste, and these three Englishmen, although they cannot outvote Sir H. Ward, the Governor, are able to discuss questions of public interest in the eye and the ear of the public, and to tell what the independent population want, and so to form a representation of public opinion in the Council, which I will undertake to say, although so inefficient, is yet of high importance in the satisfactory government of that island.

I have had the advantage of discussing the question of Bright's views on India with the distinguished Anglo-Indian Sir Alfred Lyall, who, as is well known, filled the position of Lieutenant-Governor of the North-West Provinces from 1882 to 1887 and was a member of the Council of the Secretary of State for India from 1888 to 1902; and he has been so good as to give me his opinion on the subject. He writes:

So far as Bright desired *decentralisation*, as the best and most effective system of government in India, I thoroughly agree with his principle. I have myself advocated it for years past. And since Bright's time very considerable steps have been taken toward this end, particularly during the last two years. Every important province has now its legislative council, its police, and its assignment of revenue, which the local government can spend at its discretion, subject to certain reservations. There is also a High or Chief Court for each province; and there are strong municipalities in the chief cities. In fact, the whole administration of India has been reformed since 1858–59; for Bright was speaking at a moment when India was in great disorder; the Sepoy mutiny had been only partially suppressed, and the whole system of government was antiquated.

But I hold that Bright carried his principle too far when he proposed to abolish the supreme Government of India, and to consolidate the provinces as separate States, 'reorganised only as dependencies of this country,' and corresponding directly with the Secretary of State for India on all questions. That would mean nothing less than the government of a vast territory from London, by a Secretary of State responsible to the British Parliament ; and I am convinced that such a system would be impracticable and also very unpopular. The Governor-General of India knows very little, as Bright says, of the country which he has to rule—a Secretary of State must know infinitely less, because he is not in contact with the natives of India and cannot freely consult or converse with the leading men of all classes or with the officials, Indian or European, who are actually living among them. A Secretary of State is constantly liable to be influenced by parties at home, who are often, as is proved by experience, representatives of interests that are not always the interests of India.

The present aim of the moderate reaction among the advanced native Indian politicians is not that the provinces should become *dependencies*, which they would dislike as heartily as our colonists would dislike subjection to a Secretary of State, but that they should acquire the status of our self-governing colonies—and this would, I believe, be the eventual result of Bright's system. I think that they would soon become impatient of the remote authority of an English Minister, and, moreover, I should anticipate that each province would go its own way, if there were no supreme arbitrator in India to maintain a general unity and continuity of administrative policy. It is essential for the prosperity and progress of India that for some time to come, at least, there should be *within* the country one supreme controlling authority for legislation, finance, and the army, and I believe that all the prudent and practical leaders of native opinion would agree that this is necessary. They would all prefer to have this authority in India, not in London. They don't wish to be ruled by a Parliamentary party in England ; they desire that the chief of their government, the visible representative of distant sovereignty, shall be in their own country, where they can bring to bear upon him the weight of their needs and grievances. You will remember that the Indian people are not yet a nation: they are divided in every province by sharp differences of race and religion. At this moment something like political animosity between Mohammedans and Hindus is widening these dissensions; under local governments they might become unmanageable. I notice that Bright proposes to keep the army of each Presidency carefully distinct. I will not enlarge upon the military objections to this arrangement, except to say that these objections would be very soon discovered when forces, with no previous unity of discipline or command, were called together on an emergency. You will bear in mind that the old Presidential armies have now been absorbed into one Indian army, and that the administrative provinces or local governments are much more numerous than in Bright's day.

But I will not trouble you with a long dissertation on the general question. I will only observe that I know of no parallel or precedent in political history for the system of administering a great civilised population, as dependencies, from a distant and foreign country which has not broken down. In Colonial annals it has always failed, as with our American colonies and the Spanish dependencies in that continent. The truth is that India in 1910 is entirely different from India in 1858; and I conjecture that if Bright were speaking in the House of Commons to-day, his views would be proportionately altered. His speeches of 1858–59 disclose at various points his inevitable lack of accurate understanding of the problems which he handled; and his comparison, in the speech of August 1, of India with the small island of Ceylon is a good illustration of this deficiency, though he was quite right in urging that something like the

Ceylon Council might be introduced into the provinces of India. This is just what has since been done.

Bright's views about India were, I think, based on the belief that the English dominion would sooner or later come to an end; and he thought that the administration should be so conducted as to fit the Indian peoples, when that event happened, to take care of themselves. He put the case clearly in a speech delivered at Manchester in December 1877. Having restated his views in favour of the establishment of Presidencies, which should ultimately grow into independent States, he said:

> While the Government [of these Presidencies] would necessarily or probably be much better, you would teach the people of these Presidencies to consider themselves, as generations passed on, as the subjects and the people of that State. And thus if the time should come—and it will come; I agree with Lord Lawrence that no man who examines the question can doubt that some time it must come—when the power of England, from some cause or other, is withdrawn from India, then each one of these States would be able to sustain itself as a compact, as a self-governing community. You would have five or six great States there, as you have five or six great States in Europe; but that would be a thousand times better than our being withdrawn from it now when there is no coherence amongst those twenty nations, and when we should find the whole country, in all probability, lapse into chaos and anarchy, and into sanguinary and interminable warfare. I believe that it is our duty not only to govern India well now for our own sakes and to satisfy our own conscience, but so to arrange its government and so to administer it that we should look forward to the time—which may be distant, but may not be

so remote—when India will have to take up her own government and administer it in her own fashion. I say he is no statesman—he is no man actuated with a high moral sense with regard to our great and terrible moral responsibility—who is not willing thus to look ahead, and thus to prepare for circumstances which may come sooner than we think, and sooner than any of us hope for, but which must come at some not very distant date.

Some of the reforms which Bright advocated in the administration of India have, to some extent, been carried out.

In November 1884 Bright wrote to an Indian correspondent :

> You speak of my services to your country. I wish I could have done more for your vast population, now connected and subject to the rule of my country. It is to me a great mystery that England should be in the position she now is in relation to India. I hope it may be within the ordering of Providence that ultimately good may arise from it. I am convinced that this can only come from the most just government which we are able to confer upon your countless millions, and it will always be a duty and a pleasure to me to help forward any measure that may tend to the well-being of your people. I think I perceive an increased interest here in your welfare, and a growing intelligence and influence among the natives of India in anything that is calculated to promote their wise and just government. The principles which have distinguished the administration of Lord Ripon seem to me to be those which promise to be beneficial to you and creditable to us. I hope every future Governor-General may merit the confidence of our Government at home and of the vast population whose

interests may be committed to his charge. I thank you for the gift of your volumes. I shall value them as you desire, and as a proof that in the little I have been able to do my small services have been appreciated by those for whom my sympathy and good intentions have been so strongly excited. So far as I know how to do so, I would be as much a friend of India as of England.

I am, yours, &c.,
JOHN BRIGHT.

It remains yet to be seen whether the independent States which he favoured will ultimately grow up, either by the consent of the people of England, or by the force of circumstances which they cannot control.

NOTE TO CHAPTER VII

The Mutilation of Sir Alexander Burnes' Despatches

The story of Sir Alexander Burnes is well known. He was English Resident at Kabul from 1836 to 1841. Trouble arose between England and Afghanistan. Burnes desired peace, and sent despatches to Lord Palmerston (the Foreign Minister) in that spirit. Palmerston was bent on war, and when asked to produce the despatches of Burnes laid them on the table of the House of Commons in a mutilated state, so as to pervert their meaning and give them rather a warlike than a peaceful colour. On March 19, 1861, Mr. Dunlop brought the subject before the House of Commons, when Bright made a vehement attack on Palmerston. The speech is an admirable specimen of Bright's invective. He began:

When the noble lord rose, I observed, from his countenance and from his language, that he seemed to be suffering from the passion of anger. [Viscount Palmerston : ‘ Not much ’]. ‘ Not much,’ the noble lord says. I admit that in the course of his speech he calmed down ; but he was so far led from what I think was a fair course as to charge the hon. and learned gentleman who introduced this motion with making a violent and vituperative speech, and he spoke of ‘ that vocabulary of abuse of which the hon. gentleman appeared to be master.’

Having shown that Dunlop spoke with great moderation, and stated the case with ability and fairness, he went on :

The fact is the noble lord felt himself hit. The noble lord is on his trial in this case. . . . After a few sentences the noble lord touched upon the case of Sir Alexander Burnes, and he made a very faint denial of the misrepresentations which are charged against the Government of that day in the case of that gentleman. But he went on to say that, after all, these things were of no importance ; that what was in, or what was left out, was unimportant. But I should like to ask the noble lord what was the object of the minute and ingenious, and I will say unmatched, care which was taken in mutilating the despatches of a gentleman whose opinions were of no importance and whose writings could not make the slightest difference either to the question or to the opinions of any person concerned ? The noble lord, too, has stooped to conduct which, if I were not in this House, I might describe in language which I could not possibly use here without being told that I was transgressing the line usually observed in discussions in this assembly. The noble lord has stooped so low as to heap insult, throughout the whole of his speech, upon

> the memory of a man who died in the execution of what he believed to be his public duty—a duty which was thrust upon him by the mad and obstinate policy of the noble lord; and whilst his blood cries to Heaven against that policy, the noble lord, during a three-quarters of an hour's speech in this House, has scarcely ceased to heap insult on his memory.

The next sentence is delightful in its delicacy of touch. It is the cut of a rapier, not the blow of a bludgeon:

> What the noble lord told us throughout his speech was that Sir Alexander Burnes was a man of the greatest simplicity of character. I could not, however complimentary I were disposed to be, retort that upon the noble lord.

Having pointed out that though Palmerston was now inclined to depreciate the services of Burnes, still he had retained the unfortunate official for several years at Kabul; and having reminded the House that they were not there that night to discuss the Afghan War or questions of Indian policy, but to find out who had mutilated the despatches of Sir Alexander Burnes, he continued, determined to keep Palmerston to the point:

> It is worth while knowing whether there was, and is, a man in high position in the Government here, or in India, who had so low a sense of honour, and of right, that he could offer to this House mutilated, false, forged despatches, and opinions of a public servant who lost his life in the public service. Conceive any man at this moment in India engaged, as many have been during the last three years, in perilous services—conceive that any man should know that to-morrow, or next week, or any time this year, he may lay his

bones in that distant land, and that six months afterwards there may be laid on the table of this House by the noble lord at the head of the Government, or by the Secretary of State for India, letters or despatches of his from which passages have been cut out, and into which passages have been inserted in which words have been so twisted as wholly to divert and distort his meaning, and to give to them a meaning, it may be, utterly the contrary, to that which his original despatch intended to convey. I cannot conceive any anticipation more painful or more bitter, more likely to eat into the heart of any man engaged in the service of his country in a distant land.

In the next passage he comes to still closer quarters with the Prime Minister. It is an excellent example of the style in which Bright hits out from the shoulder when thoroughly aroused:

> It is admitted, and the noble lord has not flatly denied it—he cannot deny it—he knows it as well as the hon. and learned member for Greenock [Mr. Dunlop]—he knows it as well as the very man whose hand did the evil—he knows there have been garbling, mutilation, practically and essentially falsehood and forgery, in these despatches which have been laid before the House. Why was it refused to give the original despatches when they were asked for in 1842 by the hon. member for Inverness-shire [Mr. H. Baillie], and when they were asked for at a later period by the hon. member for Sheffield [Mr. Hadfield]. Why was it that the originals were so consistently withheld? That they have been given now, I suppose, is because those who were guilty of the outrage of the faith of Parliament thought, as twenty years had elapsed, that nobody would give himself the trouble to go into the question, and that no man would be so earnest as my hon. friend the member for Greenock in bringing the question before the notice of Parliament.

My hon. friend the member for Sheffield [Mr. Hadfield] informs me that it was the noble lord the member for King's Lynn [Lord Stanley] who consented to the production of the original despatches when he was in office. I was not aware of that fact ; but I am free here to tender him my thanks for the course which he took. I am sure he is the last man whom any one would suspect of being mixed up in any transaction of this kind, except with a view to give the House and the country full information with regard to it. I say, then, avoiding all the long speech of the noble lord, that the object of the committee is to find out who did this evil thing—who placed upon the table of the House information which was knowingly false, and despatches that were actually forged—because if you add to or detract from, or so change a coin, or note, or deed, as to make any of them bear a meaning contrary to its original and intended meaning, of course you are guilty of such an act as I have described, and that is precisely what somebody has done in the despatches which we are now discussing. I say an odious offence has been committed against the House, and against the truth ; and what we want to know is, who did it ?

In the next passage he practically accuses Palmerston of having done the deed :

Now, will the noble lord be candid enough—he does not think there is anything wrong—he says there is not much—it is very trifling—that Sir Alexander Burnes' opinions are not worth much—supposing it to be so—for the sake of argument let me grant it ; but if it is a matter of no importance, will the noble lord be so candid as to tell us who did it ? When Lord Broughton was examined before the Official Salaries Committee some years ago, he, as the noble lord is aware, said that he took upon himself, as President of the Board of Control at the time, the entire responsibility of the

Afghan War. The noble lord now at the head of the Government [Lord Palmerston] was then a member of the India Board, and so I believe was the noble lord the member for the City of London [Lord John Russell]. But the noble lord at the head of the Government was also Secretary for Foreign Affairs. Now, I do not think I am wrong in supposing that this question lies between the noble lord the Prime Minister and Lord Broughton, once a member of this House. This thing was not done by some subordinate who cannot be found out.

My hon. and learned friend says ' it has been done with marvellous care, and even with so much ability that it must have been done by a man of genius.' Of course there are men of genius in very objectionable walks of life ; but we know that the noble lord at the head of the Government is a man of genius ; if he had not been he would not have sat on that bench for the last fifty years. And we know that Lord Broughton is a man of many and varied accomplishments. And once more I ask the noble lord to tell us who did it. He knows who did it. Was it his own right hand, or was it Lord Broughton's right hand, or was it some clever secretary in the Foreign Office or in the India Office who did this work ?

I say the House has a right to know. We want to know that. We want to drag the delinquent before the public. This we want to know, because we wish to deter other Ministers from committing the like offence ; and we want to know it for that which most of all is necessary, to vindicate the character and honour of Parliament. Nothing can sink Parliament to a lower state of degradation and baseness than that it should permit Ministers of the Crown to lay upon the table, upon questions involving the sacrifice of £20,000,000 of money and 20,000 lives, documents which are not true—which slander our public servants, and which slander them most basely when they are dead and are not here to answer. I do not believe that the gentlemen of England in this House—upon that side of the House or upon this—will ever consent to sit down with a case proved so clearly as this is without directing the omnipotent power and eye of Parliament into the matter.

Mr. Dunlop's motion was opposed by Lord Palmerston and rejected by the House.

CHAPTER VIII

THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

In February 1861 the Southern States—the slave States—of the great American Republic seceded from the Union, South Carolina leading the way. A constitution was formed for the new Confederacy, and Jefferson Davis became its President. On February 18 Davis declared that the separate independence of the Confederacy should, if necessary, be defended by the sword.

In March Abraham Lincoln entered into office as President of the United States. Referring to the condition of things in the South, he said that he would not interfere—he had not the power to interfere—with the institution of slavery wherever it existed; but he denied the right of any State to secede from the Union; such secession was an act of rebellion.

There were hopes at first that the differences between North and South might be amicably adjusted; but these hopes were soon dispelled. South Carolina was the first State to secede; she was the first State to begin the war. While each State had the management of its own local affairs, the Federal Government (*inter alia*) controlled the army and navy and coast defences. Accordingly, Fort Sumter, in the harbour of Charleston, was garrisoned by Federal troops. In April the secessionists of South Carolina attacked and captured it. Immediately afterwards President Lincoln called for 75,000 volunteers to crush the rebellion and declared the Southern ports under blockade.

On May 8 Lord John Russell stated in the House of Commons that, after consultation with the law officers, the Government had decided to acknowledge the belligerent rights of the South. This decision, so hastily arrived at, gave umbrage to the North. As the war went on the relations between England and the United States grew less and less friendly. In England the ruling and influential classes were all in favour of the South. Only a small minority of Englishmen were in sympathy with the North. At the head of this minority stood John Bright. To him the war was a question of slavery. The victory of the South meant the maintenance of that foul institution; the victory of the North its destruction. But apart from the question of slavery, Bright was warmly attached to the American Republic, for he thought that its government rested, more perhaps than the government of any country in the world, on the free choice of a free people. In December 1861 Abraham Lincoln presented Bright with two copies of a portrait of himself. On one of these copies Bright wrote:

> And if there be on Earth and among men any right Divine to govern, surely it rests with the Ruler so chosen and so appointed.—December 4th, 1861.

Many people in England, indeed the majority of the English people, thought that in the war which had just commenced the great Republic of the West would go to pieces. Perhaps English public opinion was well expressed in a letter which Dr. Russell, the eminent war correspondent of the *Times*, wrote to the American diplomat, John Bigelow, in April 1861. Dr. Russell said:

> I fear, my friend, you are going to immortal smash. That little lump of revolutionary leaven has at last set to work in good earnest, and the whole mess of social and political life is fermenting unhealthily.
>
> Of course you all try to disguise your trouble and your danger by talking of the lesson to the world's moral force, no bloodshed, &c., &c. But the world will only see in it all the failure of republican institutions in time of pressure as demonstrated by all history—that history which America vainly thought she was going to set right and re-establish on new grounds and principles.[1]

There is no doubt that the majority of English people who thought that the Republic would be smashed wished it to be smashed. They said it would be 'better for us.' This view of the case Bright vehemently condemned. Speaking at Rochdale in November 1861, he said:

> It has been said, 'How much better it would be'—not for the United States, but—'for us, that these States should be divided.' I recollect meeting a gentleman in Bond Street one day before the Session was over. He was a rich man and one whose voice is much heard in the House of Commons; but his voice is not heard when he is on his legs, but when he

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[1] *The Retrospections of John Bigelow*, vol. i. p. 347.

is cheering other speakers ; and he said to me, ‘ After all, this is a sad business about the United States : but still I think it very much better that they should be split up. In twenty years ’—or in fifty years, I forget which it was—‘ they will be so powerful that they will bully all Europe.’ And a distinguished member of the House of Commons—distinguished there by his eloquence, distinguished more by his many writings—I mean Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton—he did not exactly express a hope, but he ventured on something like a prediction, that the time would come when there would be, I do not know how many, but about as many independent States on the American continent as you can count upon your fingers. There cannot be a meaner motive than this I am speaking of, in forming a judgment on this question—that it is ‘ better for us ’—for whom ? the people of England, or the Government of England ?—that the United States should be severed, and that the North American continent should be as the continent of Europe is, in many States, and subject to all the contentions and disasters which have accompanied the history of the States of Europe. I should say that, if a man had a great heart within him, he would rather look forward to the day when, from that point of land which is habitable nearest to the Pole, to the shores of the Great Gulf, the whole of that vast continent might become one great confederation of States—without a great army and without a great navy, not mixing itself up with the entanglements of European politics, without a custom-house inside, through the whole length and breadth of its territory, and with freedom everywhere, equality everywhere, law everywhere, peace everywhere—such a confederation would afford at least some hope that man is not forsaken of Heaven, and that the future of our race may be better than the past.

In November 1861 an event occurred which, as everybody knows, nearly led to war between England and the United States. The Confederate Government sent two envoys (Slidell and Mason) to Europe, the one to England, the other to France, for the purpose of persuading these Powers to recognise the independence of the South. The envoys sailed from Havana in the English mail steamer *Trent*, bound for Southampton. About two hundred and fifty miles from Havana the *Trent* was stopped by the United States sloop of war the *San Jacinto* (commanded by Captain Wilkes); the envoys were seized, transferred to the *San Jacinto*, brought back to America and imprisoned in a fort in Boston harbour. The affair raised a storm of indignation in England; and the friends of the South were specially active in denouncing the 'outrage' which had been committed on the English flag. Lord John Russell wrote to the American Secretary of State, Mr. Seward, demanding the release of the prisoners. But as a matter of fact Abraham Lincoln had condemned the action of Captain Wilkes the moment he heard of it. He said, 'This is the very thing the British captains used to do. They claimed the right of searching American ships and carrying men out of them. That was the cause of the war of 1812. Now, we cannot abandon our own principles. We shall have to give these men up and apologise for what we have done.'

Mr. Seward had no difficulty in granting Lord John Russell's request. He wrote: 'It will be seen that this Government cannot deny the justice of the claim presented to us, in this respect, upon its merits. We are asked to do to the British nation what we have always insisted all nations ought to do unto us.' He added that the prisoners should be 'cheerfully liberated.' They were immediately liberated, and sailed for Europe in January 1862. The affair, however, strained the relations between England and the United States almost to the snapping-point. Englishmen declared that America wanted to make war on them ; and Lord Palmerston, who, as has been truly said, was ever ready to wave the English flag in anybody's face, blustered a good deal in his usual fashion.[1] Bright, while condemning the conduct of Captain Wilkes, was calm and dignified ; and in a great speech delivered at Rochdale in December, counselled his fellow-countrymen to keep cool in the crisis. Dealing with the statement that the United States desired war with England, he said :

> Now, our great advisers of the *Times* newspaper have been persuading people that this is merely one of a series of acts which denote the determination of the Washington Government to pick a quarrel with the people of England. Did you ever know anybody who was not very nearly dead-drunk who, having as much upon his hands as he could manage, would offer to fight everybody about him ? Do you believe that the United States Government, presided over by President Lincoln, so constitutional in all his acts, so moderate as he has been—representing at this moment that great party in the United States, happily now in the ascendancy, which has always been especially in favour

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[1] We now know that the original despatch to Lord Lyons (the English ambassador at Washington) was so altered and softened by the Prince Consort and Queen Victoria as to help considerably in averting the danger of war.—*Letters of Queen Victoria* (Popular edition), vol. iii. pp. 469-470.

of peace, and especially friendly to England—do you believe that such a Government, having now upon its hands an insurrection of the most formidable character in the South, would invite the armies and the fleets of England to combine with that insurrection, and, it might be, to render it impossible that the Union should ever again be restored?

Cobden was not present at the Rochdale meeting, but he wrote afterwards to his friend:

Midhurst: Dec. 6, 1861.

Your admirable address cannot fail to do good. But it is a mad world we live in. Here I am in the midst of extracts from Hansard, &c., to show up the folly or worse of the men who have been putting us to millions of expense to protect us from a *coup de main* from France, and now we see the same people willing to rush into war with America, and leave us exposed to this crafty and dangerous neighbour.[1] Might we not be justified in turning hermits, letting our beards grow, and returning to our caves?

On January 3, 1862, Bright wrote to Mr. John Bigelow, then American consul in Paris:

Rochdale: Jan. 3, 1862.

Dear Mr. Bigelow,—I ought to have acknowledged your most kind letter sooner, but I have felt almost incapable of writing while so dark a cloud has been over us. From letters I have read from you, your Ministers at Vienna and St. Petersburg, and from several of your consuls and countrymen in England, I am able to hope that my speech will have some good effect in the United States, unless it be lost in the confusion caused by the hostile attitude assumed by the Press and Government of England. It is a great mistake to imagine that our people are against your people. Our Government is made up of men drawn from the aristocratic families—it is therefore aristocratic, and, from a natural instinct, it must be hostile to your greatness and to the permanence of your institutions. Our rich men take their course mainly from the aristocracy, to whom they look up; and our Press, in London especially, is directly influenced by the Government, and the two sections of the aristocracy for which it writes; we have also our tremendous military services, with all their influence on the Government and on opinion. But we have other and better influences—the town populations, the Nonconformist congregations, the quiet and religious people, and generally, I believe, the working men—these have done much to put down the war cry, and to make a very considerable demonstration in favour of moderation, and, if needful, of arbitration.

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[1] 'Palmerston was urging an enormous expenditure for the coast defences of England from the predatory instincts of the Bonaparte with whom he was flirting for an alliance to discipline the United States.'—*Retrospections of John Bigelow.*

The feeling here is strongly in favour of peace, and we are hoping for good news by the boat on Monday next. If this difficulty is surmounted, I think the disposition here will be rendered much more favourable to the North than it has been of late. The religious and anti-slavery element has been stirred, and every week shows how likely your struggle is to be the destruction of the slave system. . . .

I am living upon faith—faith that God will not permit the perpetuation of slavery on your continent, and that your grand experiment of freedom and self-government will not fail. I believe there is no other Government in the world that would have survived the perils which yours passed through from March 1860 to April 1861; and when I see the order and unity exhibited in all the Northern States, I cannot believe

> in the crash which ignorant and evil-minded men here have foretold and evidently wish for.
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> I need hardly tell you that Mr. Cobden and I have done all we could by writing to our intimate friends in this Government to urge them to moderation and peace. The Prime Minister [Lord Palmerston] is old, and steeped in the traditions of past generations; he has made his only reputation by the pretence that he is plucky and instant in the defence of English honour, and he is in that condition just now that a revival of popularity is very needful for him. If foreign affairs are tranquil, his Government must break up. Bluster and occasionally war even have been resorted to by Ministers in past times to sustain a tottering statesman or a falling party, and I am not sure that some of our present Ministers have a morality superior to that of their predecessors.

Motley the historian, writing to Bigelow from the United States Legation at Vienna, said:

> I won't characterise the conduct of England, as exhibited in its Press, with two honourable exceptions, *Daily News* and *Star*, and in its public speeches with the single exception of John Bright—to whom I feel much more disposed to give a vote of thanks than to Captain Wilkes—its attitude towards us will not be one for honourable men to feel proud of, one of these days.[1]

Every one knows the story of the *Alabama*. The Confederate Government had fitted out several cruisers to prey upon the commerce of the North. Among these cruisers were the *Sumter*, the *Savannah*, the *Nashville*, the *Petrel*, and the *Florida*.

But the most famous of them all was the *Alabama*.

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[1] Bigelow.

The *Alabama* was built at Birkenhead in the dockyard of the famous shipbuilders Messrs. Laird and Co.

It soon became a fact of public knowledge that the Messrs. Laird were building a cruiser for the service of the Confederate States. Mr. Adams, the United States ambassador in London, wrote to Lord John Russell on the subject, describing the character of the ship and requesting the Foreign Secretary to give orders forbidding her to leave the Mersey. But Lord John Russell was sceptical. He asked for proofs to show that the ship was a war vessel intended for the Confederate Government. Mr. Adams sent him the opinion of an eminent lawyer, Sir Robert Collier, stating that the vessel ought to be detained and that the case was unquestionably an infringement of the Foreign Enlistment Act, 'which if not enforced on this occasion is little better than a dead letter.'

Lord John still remained sceptical. He asked for more proofs; Mr. Adams sent him more. Then he consulted the law officers of the Crown. They confirmed the opinion of Sir Robert Collier, and said that the ship should not be allowed to leave the Mersey. At length Lord John was roused to activity. On July 29, 1862, he wired to the Custom House authorities at Liverpool to prevent the ship from sailing. But the ship *had* sailed the previous day. Lord John was too late. The *Alabama* (900 tons burden, 300 horse-power) was commanded by an officer of the American Navy, Captain Semmes, but her crew were chiefly English; 'her guns and her gunners were English; many of the latter belonged to the Royal Naval Reserve, and were actually receiving pay from the English Government ; she sailed under the English flag, was welcomed in English harbours, and never was in, or even saw, a Confederate port.'[1]

For one year she ran her course and made her name terrible on the seas. She destroyed some seventy merchant ships belonging to the North, and wherever she went left behind her a track of ruin. Sometimes, in the night, a United States merchantman saw in the distance a blaze of light, which only too clearly suggested that most tragic of all calamities, a ship on fire on the high seas. The merchantman hastened to the rescue—to find indeed a ship on fire, but also to find the *Alabama* in the background ready to sink her too. When Englishmen complained of the bitterness shown by the Northern States towards England during the war, Bright reminded them of the operations of the *Alabama*. He said :

> She hoists the English flag when she wants to come alongside a ship ; she sets a ship on fire in the night, and when, seeing fire, another ship bears down to lend help, she seizes it, and pillages and burns it. I think that, if we were citizens of New York, it would require a little more calmness than is shown in this country to look at all this as if it was a matter with which we had no concern.[2]

The case has been well put in the 'Bigelow Papers' :

You wonder why we 're hot, John ?
  Your mark wuz on the guns,
The neutral guns, that shot, John,
  Our brothers an' our sons.

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[1] McCarthy, *History of Our Own Times.*

[2] Speech at Birmingham, December 18, 1862.

Mr. Laird was very proud of the *Alabama*, and he once said in the House of Commons, amid the cheers of the war party, that he would rather be known as the 'builder of a dozen *Alabamas*' than be a man who, like Bright, had set class against class.[1] Bright replied :

> Then I come to the last thing I shall mention—to the question of the ships which have been preying upon the commerce of the United States. I shall confine myself to that one vessel, the *Alabama*. She was built in this country ; all her munitions of war were from this country ; almost every man on board her was a subject of Her Majesty. She sailed from one of our chief ports. She is known to have been built by a firm in which a member of this House was, and I presume is, interested. Now, sir, I do not complain—I know that once, when I referred to this question two years ago, when my hon. friend the member for Bradford brought it forward in this House, the hon. member for Birkenhead [Mr. Laird] was excessively angry—I do not complain that the member for Birkenhead has struck up a friendship with Captain Semmes, who may probably be described, as another sailor once was of similar pursuits, as being 'the mildest mannered man that ever scuttled ship.' Therefore, I do not complain of a man who has an acquaintance with that notorious person, and I do not complain, and did not then, that the member for Birkenhead looks admiringly upon the greatest example which men have ever seen of the greatest crime which men have ever committed. I do not complain even that he shall applaud that which is founded upon a gigantic traffic in living flesh and blood, a traffic into which no subject of this realm can enter without being deemed a felon in the eyes of our law and punished as such.

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[1] McCarthy. *Bright's Speeches*, vol. i. p. 134.

But what I do complain of is this, that the hon. gentleman the member for Birkenhead, a magistrate of a county, a deputy-lieutenant—whatever that may be —a representative of a constituency, and having a seat in this ancient and honourable assembly—that he should, as I believe he did, if concerned in the building of this ship, break the law of his country by driving us into an infraction of International Law, and treating with undeserved disrespect the Proclamation of neutrality of the Queen.

The *Alabama* at length met her fate. On June 19, 1864, she was five miles off Cherbourg. The United States cruiser *Kearsarge* came in sight, attacked the Southern pirate, and sunk her in an hour and a half. Captain Semmes was saved by an English yacht. The sequel to the story of the *Alabama* may be briefly told. While the war continued the United States could not square accounts with England. But when the war was over, the Government of Washington demanded reparation from the Government of St. James' for the injuries done to American commerce by the ship which Messrs. Laird had built. The question was referred to arbitration. The arbitrators gave their award at Geneva, 1872. They decided in favour of America and mulcted the English Government in damages to the tune of £3,000,000.[1]

In the first year of the war things went badly with the North. The war party in England rejoiced, and gladly foretold the speedy downfall of the Republic. Even Mr. Gladstone indulged in this palatable prophecy. But Bright's faith in the North never wavered. He declared that faith in a memorable passage of noble eloquence:

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[1] The damages were awarded in respect of the injuries done by other Southern ships of war as well as by the *Alabama*. The English representative, Sir Alexander Cockburn, agreed to the decision only as it affected the *Alabama*.

> I do not blame any man here who thinks the cause of the North hopeless and the restoration of the Union impossible. It may be hopeless; the restoration may be impossible. You have the authority of the Chancellor of the Exchequer on that point. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, as a speaker, is not surpassed by any man in England, and he is a great statesman; he believes the cause of the North to be hopeless; that their enterprise cannot succeed.
>
> Well, he is quite welcome to that opinion, and so is anybody else. I do not hold that opinion; but the facts are before us all, and, as far as we can discard passion and sympathy, we are all equally at liberty to form our own opinion. But what I do blame is this. I blame men who are eager to admit into the family of nations a State which offers itself to us based upon a principle, I will undertake to say, more odious and more blasphemous than was ever heretofore dreamed of in Christian or Pagan, in civilised or in savage times. The leaders of this revolt propose this monstrous thing—that over a territory forty times as large as England, the blight and curse of slavery shall be for ever perpetuated.
>
> I cannot believe, for my part, that such a fate will befall that fair land, stricken though it now is with the ravages of war. I cannot believe that civilisation, in its journey with the sun, will sink into endless night in order to gratify the ambition of the leaders of this revolt, who seek to
>
> Wade through slaughter to a throne,
> And shut the gates of mercy on mankind.
>
> I have another and a far brighter vision before my gaze.

It may be but a vision, but I will cherish it. I see one vast confederation stretching from the frozen North in unbroken line to the glowing South, and from the wild billows of the Atlantic westward to the calmer waters of the Pacific main—and I see one people, and one language, and one law, and one faith, and, over all the wide Continent, the home of freedom, and a refuge for the oppressed of every race and of every clime.'[1]

On March 26, 1863, Bright addressed a great meeting in St. James' Hall, convened by the Trades' Unions of London. After the meeting he wrote to Mr. Bigelow:

Rochdale: April 8, '63.

. . . The Trades' Unionist meeting was a remarkable affair—I have seen no meeting on the American question more remarkable. I endeavoured to point out the principle involved in your struggle, and the interest which workmen and artisans have in it. The speeches of the workmen were very good and logical, and I think the effect of the meeting on the most numerous class in this country must be considerable. . . .

You will have heard that our Government have seized a ship building in Liverpool for the Southern conspirators, and that they are manifesting some activity in regard to other vessels building for the same respectable concern. I hope they are in earnest; but I never trust them in anything—there is much more of baseness than of magnanimity in the policy of our ruling class. But I hear that Mr. Adams observes a sensible change in the tone and conduct of our Foreign Office towards his Government, and I hope this is true and that the change is sincere. I am sure that if the news from the States becomes more and more favourable to your Government, then our Government will become more and more civil to yours. There will be plenty of dirt for our people (our Government) to eat if you should succeed in restoring the Union, and I shall not make a wry face if they have to eat it.

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[1] Speech at Birmingham, December 18, 1862.

Seeing what you can do in ships and men and funds, you will be much more thought of in this country hereafter—not more loved or less hated, but perhaps more feared.

On April 17, 1863, Charles Sumner wrote to Bright:

Washington: April 17, 1863.

Two days ago the President sent for me to come to him at once. When I arrived, he said that he had been thinking of a matter on which we had often spoken, the way in which English opinion should be directed, and that he had drawn up a resolution embodying the ideas which he should hope to see adopted by public meetings in England.

I enclose the resolution, in his autograph, as he gave it to me. He thought it might serve to suggest the point which he regarded as important.

The resolution ran as follows, in Abraham Lincoln's handwriting:

Whereas, while *heretofore* States and Nations have tolerated slavery, *recently*, for the first [time] in the world, an attempt has been made to construct a new nation upon the basis of and with the primary and fundamental object to maintain, enlarge, and perpetuate human slavery, therefore,

Resolved, that no such embryo State should ever be recognised by, or admitted into, the family of Christian and civilised nations; and that all Christian and civilised men everywhere should, by all lawful means, resist to the utmost such recognition or admission.[1]

During the height of the war, Mr. Justin McCarthy tells us, he heard an eminent writer on political economy laying down the law to Bright on the impossibility of the Federal Government coming successfully out of the struggle :

> The economist arrayed facts and figures together in the most appalling way, with the object of proving that even if the Northern States should come out of the struggle with a technical victory, it must be only to sink into complete national bankruptcy. When he found himself growing exhausted for want of breath, he closed his exposition with the words, 'Now, Mr. Bright, what have you to say to that ?' Bright paused for a moment as if he were thinking the whole matter out, and then blandly replied, 'Well, my opinion is that the Northern States will manage somehow to muddle through.' [2]

On June 30, 1863, Mr. Roebuck, Liberal member for Sheffield, brought forward a motion in the House of Commons in favour of the recognition of the South. Bright denounced the proposal in a speech characterised by humour, argument, and invective. His attack on Roebuck was in his happiest vein, and the reference to 'tear 'em'—which was a summing-up of Roebuck's character for pugnacity and 'cussedness'—convulsed the House. He began :

> '. . . The Chancellor of the Exchequer [Mr. Gladstone], who is known not to be very zealous in

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[1] This resolution, with the extract from Sumner's letter copied in Bright's handwriting, is framed at the house of Bright's daughter, Mrs. Clark, Millfield, Street, Somerset.

[2] *Reminiscences.*

the particular line of opinion that I have adopted, addressed the hon. gentleman in the smoothest language possible, but still he was obliged to charge him with the tone of bitter hostility which marked his speech.

'On a recent occasion the hon. member addressed some members of his constituency—I do not mean in his last speech, I mean in the speech in August last year—in which he entered upon a course of prophecy which, like most prophecies in our day, does not happen to come true. But he said then what he said to-night, that the American people and Government were overbearing. He did not tell his constituents that the Government of the United States had, almost during the whole of his lifetime, been conducted by his friends of the South. He said that, if they were divided, they would not be able to bully the whole world; and he made use of these expressions: "The North will never be our friends; of the South you can make friends—they are Englishmen—they are not the scum and refuse of the world."'

Mr. Roebuck. 'Allow me to correct that statement. What I said I now state to the House, that the men of the South were Englishmen, but that the army of the North was composed of the scum of Europe.'

Bright. 'I take, of course, that explanation of the hon. and learned gentleman, with this explanation from me, that there is not, so far as I can find, any mention near that paragraph, and I think there is not in the speech a single word, about the army.'

Mr. Roebuck. 'I assure you I said that.'

Bright. 'Then I take it for granted that the hon. and learned gentleman said that, or that if he said what I have read he greatly regrets it.'

Mr. Roebuck. 'No, I did not say it.'

Bright. 'The hon. and learned gentleman in his resolution speaks of other Powers. But he has unceremoniously got rid of all the Powers but France, and he comes here to-night with a story of an interview with a man whom he describes as the great ruler of France—tells us of a conversation with him—asks us to accept the lead of the Emperor of the French on, I will undertake to say, one of the greatest questions that ever was submitted to the British Parliament. But it is not long since the hon. and learned gentleman held very different language. I recollect in this House, only about two years ago, that the hon. and learned gentleman said, "I hope I may be permitted to express in respectful terms my opinion, even though it should affect so great a potentate as the Emperor of the French. I have no faith in the Emperor of the French." On another occasion the hon. and learned gentleman said—not, I believe, in this House—"I am still of opinion that we have nothing but animosity and bad faith to look for from the French Emperor." And he went on to say that still, though he had been laughed at, he adopted the patriotic character of "Tear 'em," and was still at his post.

'And when the hon. and learned gentleman came back, I think from his expedition to Cherbourg, does the House recollect the language he used on that occasion—language which, if it expressed the sentiments which he felt, at least I think he might have been content to have withheld? If I am not mistaken, referring to the salutation between the Emperor of the French and the Queen of these kingdoms, he said, "When I saw his perjured lips touch that hallowed cheek." And now, sir, the hon. and learned gentleman has been to Paris, introduced there by the hon. member for Sunderland, and he has sought to become, as it were, in the palace of the French Emperor, a co-conspirator with him to drag this country into a policy which I maintain is as hostile to its interests as it would be degrading to its honour.'

Having shown that the recognition of the South would be injurious to the moral, material and political interests of England, Bright then presented to the House what to him was the real issue in the case—slavery or no slavery. Those who know of Bright's love for children—'he was never so happy as when he was with children,' one of his relatives said to me—will appreciate the following passage:

> Now, I will ask the right hon. gentleman the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and those who are of opinion with him on this question of slaughter in the American war—a slaughter which I hope there is no hon. member here, and no person out of this House, that does not in his calm moments look upon with grief and horror—to consider what was the state of things before the war. It was this: that every year in the slave States of America there were one hundred and fifty thousand children born into the world—born with the badge and the doom of slavery—born to the liability by law, and by custom, and by the devilish cupidity of man—to the lash and to the chain and to the branding-iron, and to be taken from their families and carried they know not where.
>
> I want to know whether you feel as I feel upon this question. When I can get down to my home from this House, I find half a dozen little children playing upon my hearth. How many members are there who can say with me, that the most innocent, the most pure, the most holy joy which in their past years they have felt, or in their future years they have hoped for, has not arisen from contact and association with our precious children? Well, then, if that be so—if, when the hand of death takes one of those flowers from our dwelling, our heart is overwhelmed with sorrow and our household is covered with gloom—what would it be if our children were brought up to this infernal

> system—one hundred and fifty thousand of them every year brought into the world in these slave States, amongst these 'gentlemen,' amongst this 'chivalry,' amongst these men that we can make our friends ?

Bright concluded thus :

> We know the cause of this revolt, its purposes and its aims. Those who made it have not left us in darkness respecting their intentions, but what they are to accomplish is still hidden from our sight ; and I will abstain now, as I have always abstained with regard to it, from predicting what is to come. I know what I hope for—and what I shall rejoice in—but I know nothing of future facts that will enable me to express a confident opinion. Whether it will give freedom to the race which white men have trampled in the dust, and whether the issue will purify a nation steeped in crimes committed against that race, is known only to the Supreme. In His hands are alike the breath of man and the life of States. I am willing to commit to Him the issue of this dreaded contest ; but I implore of Him, and I beseech this House, that my country may lift nor hand nor voice in aid of the most stupendous act of guilt that history has recorded in the annals of mankind.

Mr. Roebuck's resolution was never put to a division. Before it had been moved the Southern General, Lee, had successfully invaded Maryland (June 14, 1863). While it was under consideration the Federal General, Meade, defeated Lee at Gettysburg[1] and drove him out of Maryland (July 1–3). Immediately afterwards (July 4) Grant took Vicksburg. The news of these Northern victories shocked the war party in England, and the idea of obtaining the recognition of the South vanished. The debate on Mr. Roebuck's resolution was adjourned but never resumed. Meade and Grant not only defeated the Southern armies; they also defeated Mr. Roebuck's operations in the House of Commons. In 1863 two ironclads were built at Birkenhead for the Confederate Government. In September they were ready to leave the Mersey. Mr. Adams warned Lord John Russell (September 5) of the fact, saying, 'It would be superfluous in me to point out to your lordship that this is an act of war.' Lord John Russell replied, September 8: 'Lord John Russell presents his compliments to Mr. Adams, and has the honour to inform him that instructions have been issued which will prevent the departure of the two ironclad vessels from Liverpool.'

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[1] This battle has sometimes been called indecisive, but the result of it was that Lee evacuated Pennsylvania and Maryland.

The Northern victories had sharpened the intelligence of the Foreign Secretary.

During the year 1864 the North continued 'muddling through.' The defeat of the Confederates by Sherman at Atlanta on July 22 was perhaps the beginning of the end. On August 8 Farragut destroyed the Confederate flotilla near Mobile. On November 13 Sherman destroyed Atlanta and began his march through Georgia to Savannah. On December 21 Sherman entered Savannah.

In February 1865 the Confederates evacuated Charleston. On April 2 Sheridan completely defeated Lee after three days' fighting at Five Forks. Lee fell back in full retreat, evacuating Richmond, which was occupied by Grant. Sheridan followed up Lee, and again defeated him on April 6 at Sailor's Creek. On April 9 Lee surrendered, with the army of Northern

[illegible] [illegible]

John Bright

Virginia, to Grant at Appomatox. On April 12 the Confederates evacuated Mobile. On April 14 the Federal flag waved once more over Fort Sumter. The war was over; the South was beaten, the Union preserved, the institution of slavery destroyed. All that Bright had wished for and worked for was accomplished. Two years after the termination of the war a breakfast was given to the famous abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison at St. James's Hall (June 29, 1867). Bright occupied the chair, and in the course of a brief and charming speech he summed up the results of the war in a few eloquent sentences:

> The position in which I am placed this morning is one very unusual for me, and one that I find somewhat difficult; but I consider it a signal distinction to be permitted to take a prominent part in the proceedings of this day, which are intended to commemorate one of the greatest of the great triumphs of freedom, and to do honour to a most eminent instrument in the achievement of that freedom. There may be, perhaps, those who ask what is this triumph of which I speak. To put it briefly, and, indeed, only to put one part of it, I may say that it is a triumph which has had the effect of raising 4,000,000 of human beings from the very lowest depth of social and political degradation to that lofty height which men have attained when they possess equality of rights in the first country on the globe. More than this, it is a triumph which has pronounced the irreversible doom of slavery in all countries and for all time.

When I had the privilege, some few months ago, of calling at One Ash, Rochdale, Mrs. Albert Bright was so good as to show me a walking-cane which had belonged to Abraham Lincoln and was now a cherished relic in the home of the Brights. How came it there ? On the gold head of the cane there is this inscription : ' J. A. McClernand to the Hon. A. Lincoln, June 1857 ; on the ferule are the words : ' Presented to the Rev. Jas. Smith, D.D., late pastor of First Presbyterian Church, Springfield, Ills., by the family of the late President Lincoln, *in memoriam* of the high esteem in which he was held by him and them as their pastor and dear friend, 27th April, 1868.'

In 1871 the cane was bequeathed by Mr. Smith to Bright. The clause of the will ran :

> I give, devise, and bequeath unto John Bright, Esq., member of the British House of Commons, and to his heirs, the gold-mounted staff, or cane, which belonged to the deceased President Lincoln of the United States, and presented to me by the deceased's widow and family as a mark of the President's respect ; which staff is to be kept as an heirloom in the family of the said John Bright, as a token of the esteem which the late President felt for him because of his unwearied zeal and defence of the United States in suppressing the civil rebellion of the Southern States.

To-day, the name of Bright is honoured, and his memory cherished and revered, throughout the length and breadth of the great Republic of the West.

CHAPTER IX

CANADA

In the years 1865 and 1866, there were those who thought that the ill-feeling which had sprung up between England and America during the American Civil War might end in the invasion of Canada by the United States. Bright told the House of Commons, with characteristic frankness, that the ruling classes feared the hostility of the United States because these classes had during the war been unfriendly to the Republic. He said:

> I should like to ask this House, in a most serious mood, what is the reason that any man in this country has now more anxiety with regard to the preservation of peace with the United States than he had a few years ago? Is there not a consciousness in our heart of hearts that we have not during the last five years behaved generously to our neighbour? Do not we feel in some sort a pricking of conscience, and are we not sensible that conscience tends to make us cowards at this particular juncture?[1]

Bright ridiculed the notion of an American invasion of Canada. He admitted that there was a war party in the United States—a war party created by English misgovernment in another part of the world—the Irish.

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[1] House of Commons, March 13, 1865.

> I believe there is [a war party]. It is that party which was a war party eighty years ago. It is the party represented by hon. gentlemen who sit on that bench—the Irish Party. They who are hostile to this country in the United States are those who were recently malcontent subjects of the right hon. gentleman the member for Tamworth [Sir Robert Peel, Chief Secretary for Ireland]. It is these, and such as these, to whom the noble lord at the head of the Government offers only such consolation as that of telling them that 'the rights of the tenants are the wrongs of the landlords.'

But Bright contended that the Irish were not strong enough to force the United States into war. It was quite clear, in his opinion, that the Canadians would never provoke hostilities with the United States. Then how was the war to come? Not from the United States, who had had enough of war troubles. The Government of the United States, he said, was essentially a Government of peace. Were the people of England anxious to go to war with America? He did not think so.

> I believe there are no men out of Bedlam—or at least who ought to be out of it—and I suspect there are very few men in Bedlam, who are in favour of our going to war with the United States. And in taking this view I am not arguing that it is because we see the vast naval and military power and apparently inexhaustible resources of that country. I will not assume that you or my countrymen have come to the conclusion that it is better for us not to make war with America

> because you and they find her with a strength that you did not even suspect: I will say that it is upon higher grounds that we are all against a war with the United States. Our history for the last two hundred years, and further back, is a record of calamitous and, for the most part, unnecessary wars. We have had enough of whatever a nation can gain by military successes and military glory. I will not turn to the disasters that might follow to our commerce nor to the widespread ruin that might be occasioned. I will say that we are a wiser and a better people than we were in these respects, and that we should regard a war with the United States as even a greater crime, if needlessly entered into, than war with almost any other country in the world.

However, the panic-mongers in England demanded the ‘fortification’ of Canada, and on March 23, 1865, the Government proposed that a sum of £200,000 should be spent on the defences of Quebec, of which £50,000 should be paid out of the Imperial Exchequer and the balance by the Government of Canada. Bright opposed the vote. He thought that it was both unnecessary and useless. It was unnecessary because there was no likelihood of wanton invasion of Canada by the United States, and it was useless because if the United States attacked Canada, Canada could not be defended against the overwhelming power of that country. In addition it was unfair to ask the Government of Canada to pay the larger proportion of the cost of these defences which were proposed by the Imperial Government.

> What is it that the member for Oxford [Mr. Gladstone] says? He states, in reference to the expenditure for the proposed fortifications, that, though a

portion of the expenditure is to be borne by us, the main portion is to be borne by Canada ; but I venture to tell him that if there shall be any occasion to defend Canada at all, it will not arise from anything Canada does, but from what England does ; and therefore I protest against the doctrine that the Cabinet in London may get into difficulties, and ultimately into war, with the Cabinet at Washington ; that because Canada lies adjacent to the United States, and may consequently become a great battlefield, this United Kingdom has a right to call on Canada for the main portion of that expenditure.

He warned the Government not to impose burdens on the taxpayers of Canada which they would be unwilling to bear. He was not averse to the separation of Canada from England, if the Canadians so wished it. But he thought it would be deplorable if separation were to come about as the result of differences arising from any unfair treatment of the country by the Imperial Government. Let Canada, he said in effect, separate from England, let her even unite with the American Republic, but let her not be driven to separation or to union with America by the policy of England. The vote was, however, it is needless to say, passed.

From the acquisition of Canada by England in 1763,[1] six important constitutional measures affecting the government of the country had become law. In 1774 it was decided that the French law of property and the English criminal law should prevail ; that an administrative council with powers to raise money for municipal and local affairs should be established in Quebec; and that the English Parliament should reserve to itself the control of the Customs. In 1791 the country was divided into Upper and Lower Canada, with a Governor for each, and representative institutions were introduced into both 'provinces.' A House of Assembly elected by popular suffrage, and a Legislative Council nominated by the Governor on behalf of the Crown, were created. The executive was vested in the Governor and an Executive Council; but the Parliaments had no choice in the selection of the Ministers of the Crown. This Act also provided for the support of the Protestant clergy by setting apart for their use certain waste lands, called the 'clergy reserves.' Up to 1818 the Crown had the control of the purse, as the revenues were chiefly derived from the Customs. The House of Assembly in Lower Canada chafed under this control, and finally succeeded in 1818 in obtaining permission to raise taxes itself, and thus to share with the Crown the control of the purse.

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[1] Canada was conquered by England in 1759, and the conquest was confirmed by the Treaty of Paris in 1763.

The House of Assembly was almost entirely composed of French, and as a counterbalancing force the Crown made the Legislative Council almost entirely English; the Executive Council was also composed of Englishmen. The result of this arrangement was constant friction between the popular Chamber and the Legislative Council supported by the Executive. In 1831 the popular Assembly succeeded in gaining a fresh acquisition of power by obtaining control of the Customs and of almost all the revenues. The House of Assembly now stood in this position. It had practically the control of the purse, but could exercise no influence in the selection of Ministers. Between 1831 and 1838 there was a constant struggle between the popular Assembly, to have a voice in choosing the Executive, and the Upper House and the Governor to resist its demands. In 1833 the Assembly proposed to grant supplies conditionally. The conditions were refused, and the supplies were stopped. Supplies were again stopped in the years 1834, 1835, and 1836. In 1836 the English Government appointed a commission to inquire into the Canadian troubles, and the commission suggested (in an interim report) that the Act of 1831 should be repealed; in fact, practically that the House of Assembly should be deprived of the control of the purse. The House of Assembly met this proposal by again stopping the supplies; and, *inter alia*, demanding (in an address to the Governor) that the Executive Council should be made directly responsible to the Assembly. The English Government refused to grant the demand of the Assembly. The Lower House again, in 1837, refused supplies. The Parliament was then prorogued. Scenes of lawlessness and violence followed. In 1838 the Canadian Constitution was suspended, and the famous Durham Commission was issued; the result of the Durham Commission was the passing of the Act of 1840, which provided, *inter alia* [1]—

1. That the two provinces should be united under the common name of 'Canada.'

2. That there should be only one Parliament, consisting of a House of Assembly (84 members) elected

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[1] There were also troubles in Upper Canada, where the Lower House demanded that the Executive should be subject to Parliamentary control.

by popular suffrage, and a Legislative Council nominated by the Crown. The Executive Council remained.

Despite this Act, there was a disposition on the part of the first two Governors to oppose the influence of the popular Assembly in the appointment of Ministers; but this influence was ultimately established by Lord Elgin, the third Governor; and between 1846 and 1854 the Executive was made subject to the popular Chamber.[1]

Such was the condition of things up to 1867. Then the most important Act—'the British North America Act'—in the development of constitutional government in Canada became law. The framers of the Constitution of 1840 had contemplated the inclusion of Newfoundland (acquired in 1713), Nova Scotia, which then included New Brunswick (acquired in 1713), and Prince Edward Island (acquired in 1758) in the Canadian Union. But their views were not carried out at the time. Effect was partly given to these views by the Act of 1867. By this measure a Federal Constitution, embracing Canada (which was divided into the provinces of Ontario and Quebec) and Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, was formed. One Parliament, consisting of a Senate and a House of Commons, was established for the 'Dominion,' but each province was allowed to have a Parliament and an Executive of its own for the management of local affairs. There was a Governor-General for the Dominion, and a

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[1] During Lord Elgin's governorship a Bill, which was disliked by the English Party, was passed. When Lord Elgin gave his assent to it, riots broke out in Montreal, then the seat of government, and the Parliament House was burned down. But Lord Elgin stood to his guns, and so established the principle of Ministerial responsibility as it existed in England.

Lieutenant-Governor for each province. The Executive Council was abolished, and a Privy Council for Canada created instead.

The executive authority, with supreme command over all naval and military forces, remained vested in the English sovereign. Finally, the principle of Ministerial responsibility as it existed in England was fully recognised in Canada.[1]

Bright made a short speech in support of the second reading of this Bill. He deprecated the haste which had been shown in introducing the measure, and in pushing it through Parliament. He said the subject was one of the gravest importance, and needed more time and consideration from the House and the country than the Government seemed disposed to give it. So far as he could see, no one took sufficient interest, considering its importance, in the matter. He condemned the proposal to establish a nominated instead of an elective Legislative Council, and expressed a strong opinion in favour of allowing every province to have ample time in deciding whether it should enter the Federation or not. In this respect he thought that Nova Scotia, which seemed to be somewhat uncertain as to what course she should take, was not quite fairly dealt with, on account of the haste which the Government had shown in carrying the Bill rapidly through its various stages. He concluded with these words :

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[1] Provisions were made in the Act for the admission of new provinces to the 'Dominion.' Since the passing of the Act Manitoba and North-West Territories (1870), British Columbia (1871), and Prince Edward Island (1873) have been admitted to the 'Dominion.'

On the subject of Canada see Mr. Holland's valuable book, *Imperium et Libertas.*

I have not risen for the purpose of objecting to the second reading of this Bill. Under the circumstances I presume it is well that we should do no other than read it a second time. But I think the Government ought to have given a little more time. I think they have not treated the province of Nova Scotia with that tenderness, that generosity, and that consideration which is desirable when you are about to make so great a change in its affairs and in its future. For my share, I want the population of these provinces to do that which they believe to be best for their own interests—to remain with this country if they like it, in the most friendly manner, or to become independent States if they wish it. If they should prefer to unite themselves with the United States, I should not complain even of that. But whatever be their course, there is no man in this House or in those provinces who has a more sincere wish for their greatness and their welfare than I have who have taken the liberty thus to criticise this Bill.[1]

Lord Carnarvon, in introducing the Bill in the Lords, said:

It is not every nation or every stage of the national existence that admits of a federative government. Federation is only possible under certain conditions: when the States to be federated are so far akin that they can be united, and yet so far dissimilar that they cannot be fused into a single body politic. And this I believe to be the present condition of the provinces of North America.

I may here quote the admirable summary, given by Mr. Bernard Holland, of the powers of the Dominion Parliament and of the Provincial Legislatures:

To the Central Parliament the Act specifically assigns all questions of the public debt and property, regulation of trade and commerce, the raising of money by any mode or system of taxation, Customs and Excise, currency, coinage, and banking laws, postal arrangements, census and other statistics, the enactment of criminal law, marriage and divorce, the laws of bankruptcy, patents and copyright, questions of naturalisation and aliens, the regulation of Indians and Indian reserves; within their province also fall all matters relating to military and naval service, coast control, and sea-coast and internal fisheries. The chief subjects reserved to the Provincial Legislatures are the management and sale of public lands belonging to the province, the control of asylums, charitable and municipal institutions, and prisons, provincial roads, railways and public works, the solemnisation of marriage, property and civil rights, the administration of justice in the province and regulation of civil proceedings, and, subject to certain guarantees for the protection of religious minorities, education. The Provincial Legislatures have also the power of direct taxation, though the Dominion Parliament can also impose direct taxation if it desires. The Provincial Legislatures may also make laws with regard to agriculture and immigration within their areas, but not so as to be repugnant to any Act which the Parliament of Canada may, under their general powers, pass on the same subjects. The power of amending their own Constitution has also been entrusted to the Provincial Legislatures.[1]

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[1] House of Commons, February 28, 1867.

'The British North America Act' crowned the edifice of Canadian autonomy.

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[1] *Imperium et Libertas.*

CHAPTER X

PARLIAMENTARY REFORM

In the pages of *Punch*—a true index to the state of public opinion, and to the estimation in which public men are, for the time being, held in England—Bright is represented, between the years 1852 and 1867, as the champion of Parliamentary Reform.[1] On February 21, 1852, the cartoon shows us a group of statesmen. The Lord Chancellor is holding an infant in his arms. The infant's clothes are marked 'New Reform Bill.' Lord John Russell looks highly pleased. Bright is the central figure, and with glass in eye and Quaker's hat in hand regards the infant contemptuously. The letterpress informs us: 'Lord John Russell's second Reform Bill was coldly received by Mr. Bright and other ardent reformers. The Ministry fell shortly after its introduction, and the measure was never discussed.'

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[1] By the way, the question has often been asked why Bright is represented in *Punch* as wearing an eyeglass, when in fact he never did wear an eyeglass? The answer will be found in the *Recollections* of Sir Algernon West. Sir Algernon says: 'I asked [Tenniel] why Lord Palmerston was always drawn in *Punch* with a straw in his mouth, and he told me that, being a difficult likeness to catch, they were obliged to do something which the public should always recognise; for the same reason Mr. Bright was always drawn as wearing a broad-brimmed Quaker's hat and an eyeglass, neither of which he ever wore.'

In the cartoon for November 6, 1858, we see Bright with bellows in hands, sitting before a fire and blowing it. Over the fire hangs a cauldron on which is the word 'Reform.' Bright is represented as saying, 'It will soon boil.' Public opinion was not yet excited on the subject of Reform, and Bright had addressed several meetings, for the purpose of rousing popular enthusiasm and forcing the question on the attention of Ministers.

The cartoon for December 18, 1858, shows Bright and Russell in the character of pugilists. Bright has apparently just given Russell a knock-out blow. Russell is holding his gloved hand to his mouth and shows no inclination to come up to time. Bright, on the other hand, looks full of fight: Cobden is looking on gravely, standing near Bright, and there are two men on the floor who have been clearly knocked over by the Brummagem bruiser. The title of the cartoon is: 'Mr. Bright offers to give satisfaction to the Liberal Party.' In fact, Bright regarded Lord John Russell's Reform Bill as unsatisfactory, and proposed the widest extension of the suffrage.

The cartoon for January 29, 1859, represents Bright climbing 'a very greasy pole' on the top of which is a leg of mutton called 'Popularity.' The pole itself is called 'Reform Bill.'

On March 12, 1859, we find a drawing of the British lion—asleep; and Bright, Disraeli, and Russell are trying to wake him by poking him with red-hot bars. Bright is in the forefront of the picture. On each bar is the word 'Reform.'

On April 30, 1859, there is a picture of an open door over which is written the word 'Treasury.' There is a rush to get in. The entrance is blocked by struggling statesmen. Disraeli and Derby have the innermost position. Palmerston is pushing his way on the right, and Disraeli, who is near to him, has got jammed and looks uncomfortable. On the left Bright is pushing back foremost, touching Palmerston. Russell is crushed between both. The title of the cartoon is: 'The real ugly rush'—an adaptation of words used by Mr. Henley: 'He feared there would be an ugly rush some of these days.' The letterpress explains: 'The Reform Question had become for both parties a battle-ground for the possession of the Treasury Bench.' It proved fatal to the Derby Ministry in the preceding month.

In May 1860 Lord John Russell is represented as the 'Reform Janus.' One face is turned to Bright, saying, 'Just the thing you want, my dear Bright: double your constituency.' The other is turned to Lord Derby, saying, 'Pray don't be alarmed; it only adds one per cent. to the franchise.'

In the foreground is a roll of paper bearing the words 'Reform Bill.'

Lord John Russell's abortive Reform Bill of 1860 pleased nobody. On December 5, 1863, Bright and Cobden are represented as engaged in conversation with an agricultural labourer. The title of the cartoon is: 'Cobden's logic.' Cobden is quoted: 'I don't know, perhaps, any country in the world where the masses of the People are so illiterate as in England. . . . Sound statesmanship requires such an extension of the franchise as shall admit the masses of the people to political power.'—From Mr. Cobden's speech at Rochdale. Cobden addresses the labourer thus: 'You are the greatest booby in the universe, and therefore you ought to have a vote.'

Bright says, 'Hear, hear!'

On February 4, 1865, Bright is represented as a doctor speaking to 'his patient,' a working man. The dialogue is as follows:

Dr. Bright. 'Do you get good wages?'
Patient. 'Yes.'
Doctor. 'Have you plenty to eat and drink?'
Patient. 'Yes, as far as that goes.'
Doctor. 'Do you do as you like?'
Patient. 'Yes.'
Doctor. 'Do you pay taxes?'
Patient. 'None to hurt me much.'
Doctor. 'Ah! we must change all that. We must go in for Reform!'

'This colloquy,' is supposed to give not an 'unfair summary' of a speech delivered by Bright.

In the cartoon of November 25, 1865, Bright is represented as a 'Wallflower' at a ball.

'Nobody asks *Me*,' says 'Miss Bright'; 'and if they did, I should certainly decline.' In the background is Lord John Russell asking 'Miss Goschen' to 'join our set.'

The appendant note states: 'Lord Russell's Whig prejudices were too strong to permit his offering Mr. Bright a seat in the Cabinet—though none had better deserved it.'

In the cartoon for December 9, 1865, Bright is represented as introducing a deputation of working men to Lord John Russell, who is sitting apathetically in his library. Bright, with upraised hand and clenched fist, is addressing him. Russell says, ‘ Well, well! Don’t be violent, Mr. Bright, and proper inquiries shall be made, as we have perfect confidence in our friend, Mr. Working Man.’

The cartoon is called ‘ John Slow and John Fast.’ *Punch* explains: ‘ Lord Russell claimed to have a monopoly of the Reform Question, and was not prepared to make the violent changes demanded by Mr. Bright.’

On December 30, 1865, we are given a scene from ‘St. Stephen’s Pantomime.’ Lord John Russell as a nurse is walking along with an infant in arms. The word ‘ Reform ’ is on the infant’s robe. Bright is coming along behind as a clown. He seizes the robe, saying, ‘ What a beautiful child! Let me take care of it for yer, mum.’ We read in the letterpress: ‘ The Ministry were deaf alike to Mr. Bright’s menaces and persuasions, and their Bill, as ultimately framed, did not contain any of the points for which he contended.’

On January 20, 1866, the Reform Bill being yet unsettled, Russell and Bright are represented on board a ship. Russell is the captain, Bright an ‘ officious passenger.’ He has a trumpet, on which is written the word ‘ Reform,’ and is shouting through it: ‘ Lower away there, lower away! ’ Lord John says, ‘ Excuse me, friend Bright, but do you command this ship, or do I? ’ The letterpress says: ‘ Mr. Bright, not having been admitted to the Cabinet, was endeavouring from the platform to force the hands of the Ministry.’

On February 10, 1866, Russell and Gladstone are represented walking down to the House. Bright appears as a crossing-sweeper with his finger to his hat, saluting them. The word ‘ Reform ’ is on the pavement. Russell says, ‘ Well, Bright, what do *you* want ? ’ ‘ Johnny Bright ’ replies, ‘ Anything your Honour is willing to give me *Now*.’ According to *Punch*, Bright, finding it impossible to get his own proposals adopted by Ministers, was willing to accept a compromise.

The cartoon for September 8, 1866, is called ‘ The Brummagem Frankenstein.’ A giant is sitting on a stone. Bright, looking frightened, is stealing past. He says (a quotation from a speech at Birmingham), ‘ I have no fe-fe-fear of ma-manhood suffrage.’ Letterpress : ‘ The unwillingness of Parliament to accept any measure of Reform had aroused a widespread discontent amongst the working classes. A monster gathering was held at Birmingham in August.’

The cartoon for October 20, 1866, represents Bright as a parrot standing on a perch called ‘ Universal Suffrage.’ The parrot is shrieking, ‘ Pretty democra-a-ats ! Take ’em to the poll ! Naughty Bob Lowe ! Schgree-e-e-yx ! ! ! ’

Letterpress : ‘ Mr. Bright was now addressing Reform meetings in various towns. The burden of them was an abuse of Mr. Lowe, who had aided in rejecting Lord Russell’s measure.’

The cartoon for January 12, 1867, represents an open door. On it is written ‘ House of Commons.’ Britannia is standing inside. The ground is covered with snow. There are four rival sweepers (Bright, Russell, Derby, Disraeli) outside. Bright stands in the front looking sturdy and earnest. There is a general chorus, 'Clear yer door-step down, mum?'

Letterpress: 'All parties were pledged to a renewal of the Reform discussion in the approaching Session. There was, therefore, every prospect of an animated rivalry.' As is well known, the Reform Bill was finally carried in 1867 by the Government of Lord Derby, Mr. Disraeli being Chancellor of the Exchequer.

The cartoon of May 25, 1867, represents the Derby. Disraeli is winning, with Bright and Gladstone close at his heels. The title of the cartoon is 'The Derby, 1867. Dizzy wins with "Reform Bill."' *Punch* has given a faithful picture of the progress of the movement for Parliamentary Reform between 1852 and 1867. At first a movement of despair led by Bright (who never despaired), it finally became a movement of success led by Disraeli (who was indifferent to the subject).

Bright had no faith in aristocratic institutions. He believed in government broadly based upon the people's will; and it was to secure such a government that he advocated the cause of Parliamentary Reform. Writing to John Bigelow in March 1863 he gives the following account of the English 'representative' system:

> It is a general estimate that there are seven millions of men of twenty-one years of age and upward in the United Kingdom. Of these about one million alone can vote—there are more than a million names on the registers of electors, but as many are on more than once—that is, having a vote for the borough in which they live and the county also—a considerable deduction

> must be made, and I believe that not more than one million *persons* in the United Kingdom could vote at any one general election.
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> As to the privileged order. The House of Lords alone may be said to be strictly privileged: its members chiefly sit by hereditary title, and that is their chief privilege. The Bishops are not there by hereditary claim, and certain Scotch and Irish peers are there as representatives of the Scotch and Irish peerage, which is distinct from the peerage of the United Kingdom. I suppose the families of the House of Lords are about 400 in number; as a rule they do not meddle in trade, and they have a great influence in securing patronage for their sons and relations; and, generally, among the baronets and other territorial proprietors, not being peers, there is a great tendency to look to Government appointments for a career. Our system consists of these great families, with great landed properties; of the State Church, which is almost entirely in their hands, and devoted to their interests; and of the large class chiefly derived from the territorial ranks who fill the best offices under the Government, and in all the services of the State. In the House of Commons a large proportion of the members, more than one-third of them I think, are directly connected with members of the House of Lords, and thus the whole thing is so interwoven that it makes a fabric so strong that probably only some great convulsion will ever break through it.[1]

It was Bright's policy to reform this system, and, practically, to transfer the government of the country from the privileged classes to the masses of the people.

I think it was during the discussions on the Reform

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[1] Bigelow, vol. i. p. 610.

Bill of 1832 that Lord John Russell declared that the measure should be final—a statement which earned for him the sobriquet of 'Finality John.' Exactly twenty years after the passing of the Reform Bill of 1832, Lord John Russell brought forward another measure of Reform.[1] This measure proposed the adoption of a £20 rating franchise for counties, and a £5 rating franchise for boroughs. It also proposed to abolish property qualifications for members, to omit from the oath taken by members of Parliament the words 'on the true faith of a Christian,' and to make it no longer necessary for Ministers changing from one office to another to vacate their seats. The Bill was coldly received by all parties in the House of Commons, and was immediately withdrawn. In 1854 Lord John Russell introduced another Reform Bill, which proposed to give the franchise to £10 householders in counties, if rated not lower than £5, and to persons in boroughs rated at £6. But the measure was withdrawn on account of the Crimean War, which absorbed public attention to the exclusion of everything else.

Bright was absent from the House of Commons, owing to illness, during the years 1856 and 1857. In 1858 he returned to public life, and at once took up the question of Parliamentary Reform. Towards the end of 1858 he addressed public meetings on the subject in

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[1] In February 1851 Locke King had moved a resolution for assimilating the county and the borough franchise, and it was carried against the Government by 100 to 52. Lord John Russell at once resigned, but, as Lord Stanley was unable to form a Ministry, he resumed office in March. On this occasion Bright said, 'We will never stand Lord John as Prime Minister again.'—*Malmesbury Memoirs*, vol. i. p. 276.

England and Scotland, and prepared a Bill which, though not presented to Parliament, had the advantage of crystallising his views and making his position absolutely clear. The main features of this Bill were—the borough franchise was to be conferred on all who were rated to the relief of the poor, and on all lodgers who paid a rent of £10; no more freemen were to be created, and the county franchise was to be reduced to £10 rental. The Bill put the returning officers' expenses on the county or borough rate; prescribed that votes should be taken by ballot; disfranchised fifty-six English, twenty-one Scotch, and nine Irish boroughs; and took away one member from thirty-four other boroughs. The seats obtained by these disfranchisements were to be distributed according to population among the larger towns, counties, and divisions of counties in the 'United Kingdom.' The Bill was not brought into Parliament, but the provisions of it were well known and discussed at the time.[1]

Bright by his campaigns in the country roused the people and forced the hand even of Lord Derby's Government. In 1859 Mr. Disraeli, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, introduced a Reform Bill reducing the franchise in counties to £10, leaving the borough franchise (£10) untouched, thus establishing an identity of franchise between borough and county. It introduced several 'fancy' franchises in boroughs, giving a vote to persons having £10 per annum in the Public Funds, Bank Stock, or India Stock, or £60 in a savings bank; and to recipients of pensions in the naval, military, and civil services amounting to £20 a year. Dwellers in a portion of a house the aggregate rent of which was £20 a year could have a vote. The suffrage was also to be given to graduates of the universities, ministers of religion, members of the legal and medical professions, and to certain schoolmasters. The Bill proposed the use of voting papers, and the disfranchisement of such freeholders in towns as voted for counties.[1] The Bill was rejected on the second reading.

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[1] *Speeches of John Bright*, ed. by Thorold Rogers, vol. ii. p. 53.

In 1860 Lord John Russell introduced a Bill proposing a £10 county franchise and £6 (rental) for boroughs, twenty-five towns were to lose one member each, and there was to be a re-distribution of the spare seats among large counties ; members were to be given to Chelsea, Kensington, Birkenhead, Stalybridge, Burnley, and London University, and as third seats to Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, and Leeds. This Bill was abandoned, as Bright said, really because Lord Palmerston did not want it.

> There is not a man in the House of Commons, who was there in 1860, who knows anything at all of the manner in which Bills and questions are treated there ; and there is not a man in the present Cabinet, who does not know perfectly well that, if Lord Palmerston had said on some one evening in the year 1860 that his Government would stand or fall by the Reform Bill then before the House, that Bill would have passed through the House of Commons without one single effective hostile division ; nay, I have heard it from an authority, that I believe cannot err upon this question, that the sagacious leaders of the House of Lords had

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[1] *Speeches of John Bright*, ed. by T. Rogers, vol. ii. p. 82. Paul, *History of Reform.*

resolved that if the Bill did come up from the Commons, they would not take the responsibility of rejecting it.[1]

There was a general election in the summer of 1865. Bright addressed his constituents at Birmingham on July 12, and speaking of the reform movement, and of its inevitable success, said:

> Many of you have stood, as I have often stood, on the seashore, in an hour of quiet and of calm. No tempest drives the waves; the wind is but a whisper; and yet the tide comes on as by some latent and mysterious power. The loiterers on the beach are driven from point to point as the waves advance, and at length the whole vast basin of the ocean seems filled to the brim. So on this question: there is no violence, nor even menace of force; but opinion grows, its tide moves on; opposition, ignorant on the one hand, insolent on the other, falls back; and shortly we shall see barriers thrown down, privilege and monopoly swept away, a people enfranchised, and the measure of their freedom full.

His picture of Disraeli—slightly touched but vivid—is a masterpiece:

> The complaint now is, and the danger, that the whole nation—20,000,000 persons, men, women, and children—have no direct representation in the House of Commons of a country whose great foundation of government is the representative system and the representative principle. Well, now, what is the answer which is made to this claim? It is this: the Prime Minister [Lord Palmerston] answers it by contemptuous silence; he has not referred to it in the long and carefully written addresses which he has

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[1] Speech of John Bright at Birmingham, January 1865.

issued, not only to the electors of Tiverton, but to the electors of the United Kingdom. Well, but what says Lord Derby, speaking through the mouth of his prophet Disraeli? Why, he says, 'lateral extension.' He says to the great body of the working men—to these five millions, 'It is true you are shut out; the Reform Bill was not satisfactory; the representation may be amended; your complaint is just; and we will admit—somebody else.' Now, Mr. Disraeli is a man who does what may be called the conjuring for his party. He is what, amongst a tribe of Red Indians, would be called 'the mystery man.' He invents phrases for them—and one of the phrases, the last and the newest, is this lateral extension of the franchise. Now, Mr. Disraeli is a man of brains, of genius, of great capacity for action, of a wonderful tenacity of purpose, and of a rare courage. He would have been a statesman if his powers had been directed by any noble principle or idea. But, unhappily, he prefers a temporary and worthless distinction as the head of a decaying party, fighting for impossible ends, to the priceless memories of services rendered to his country and to freedom, on which only in our age an enduring fame can be built up. Now, what is meant by lateral extension? It means this: that all below £10 householders are not to be admitted. Well, the present law admits all that are above £10 householders, and therefore it can only include those not now included—a few men, inconsiderable in the whole number—who are lodgers, or who are brothers or sons of housekeepers whose names are already on the register; and therefore it is quite clear that this is a miserable pretence and a delusion, and an insult of the most glaring kind to the great body of the people.

Lord Palmerston died in October 1865. In November Lord John Russell became Prime Minister.

Lord Malmesbury tells us that Lord John wanted to have Bright in the Cabinet, 'but the other Ministers refuse to admit him.'[1]

On March 12, 1866, Mr. Gladstone (Chancellor of the Exchequer) introduced another Reform Bill. The main provisions of this measure were the introduction of a £14 occupation franchise for counties, and the reduction of the borough franchise from £10 to £7.[2] There were also to be a savings-bank franchise and a lodger franchise.

A famous battle raged around this Bill. Bright was the hero of the fight. He did not much like the Bill. Were he a Minister, he said, he would not have introduced it. It was 'not adequate to the occasion.' It did not go far enough, but 'so far as it goes it is a simple and honest measure.' Beggars in the House of Commons, like beggars elsewhere, could not be choosers. They had often, for the moment, to take whatever they could get. He was prepared to take the Bill of the Government as a step in advance. The Bill was opposed by the full strength of the Tory Party and by certain dissentient Liberals practically led by Mr. Lowe and Mr. Horsman. Mr. Lowe and Mr. Horsman had been members of two Liberal administrations; and it was suggested—no doubt uncharitably suggested—that if places had been found for them in the Government of the day, they would have acquiesced in the proposals of Mr. Gladstone. As it was they were its most strenuous opponents. Both vehemently attacked Bright, for they recognised that he was the true leader of the Reform movement, and did more than any other man to arouse public attention to the question, and to bring it within the range of practical politics.

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[1] Malmesbury, vol. ii. p. 346.

[2] McCarthy, vol. iv. p. 56.

Bright spoke in the course of the debate on the first reading of the Bill. His speech scintillated with humour, and his playful chastisement of Lowe and Horsman—not the less severe because playful—provoked incessant and general merriment. Having criticised the Bill sharply and pointed out its inadequacies, dwelling particularly on the paltry reduction of the borough franchise from £10 to £7, and at the same time ridiculing the position of those who poured forth ‘ cataracts of eloquence ’ to prove that such a reduction would bring ruin upon the country by the enfranchisement of the democracy, he turned his attention to Lowe and Horsman. In allusion to the attacks made upon himself, he said :

> Although in the course of this debate I have been the subject of much remark, and of not a little that may be fairly termed unusual attack, I beg to assure the House that I have not risen for the purpose of defending myself, since I am ready to leave my course in this House and my political character to the impartial view of members of the House, and to the just judgment of my countrymen outside the House.

Having referred to the fact that Lowe and Horsman once held office, and suggested that they might perhaps like to hold office again, he went on :

> I will not deal in any insinuations, but I will say that, from gentlemen who have held office, but who happen to have been left out of what may be called the daily ministrations, we have a right to expect a very

minute account of the reasons why they change their opinions before we can turn round and change with them. These are the gentlemen who all at once start up as the great teachers of statesmanship to the House and the country. Are they what the right hon. baronet the member for Droitwich spoke of in the recess—are they the foremost statesmen in the country? and, if so, is there to be a bid for them to take the place of gentlemen who have not much succeeded as statesmen when in office? In office these right hon. gentlemen are as docile as any other gentlemen in office, but I fear, notwithstanding the ideas some people have of my influence with Earl Russell, that I am not able to offer them any arguments on his part that will tell upon them. I do not object for a moment to a member of this House being fond of office. The Chancellor of the Exchequer probably lives much more happily in office than he would live if he were out of it, though I do not think he will live quite so long. I do not complain of men who are fond of office, though I could never comprehend the reason they like it so much. If I may parody, or if I may make an alteration in a line or two of one of the most beautiful poems in our language, I might ask—

> For who, to dumb forgetfulness a prey,
>   That pleasing, anxious office e'er resigned,
> Left the warm precincts of the Treasury,
>   Nor cast one last, long, lingering look behind?

What I complain of is this, that when place recedes into the somewhat dim past, that which in office was deemed patriotism vanishes with it; and we have one howl of despair from these right hon. gentlemen because it is proposed to diminish the franchise in boroughs from £10 to £7, and to add by so small a proposition as that something to the freedom of the people of this country.

His description of Horsman and Lowe and their friends in the following memorable passage delighted the House and added a phrase—Adullamite[1] —to the English language:

> The right hon. gentleman below me [Mr. Horsman] said a little against the Government and a little against the Bill, but had last night a field night for an attack upon so humble an individual as I am. The right hon. gentleman is the first of the new party who has expressed his great grief, who has retired into what may be called his political cave of Adullam, and he has called about him every one that was in distress and every one that was discontented. The right hon. gentleman has been long anxious to form a party in this House. There is scarcely any one on this side of the House who is able to address the House with effect or to take much part in our debates, whom he has not tried to bring over to his party or cabal; and at last the right hon. gentleman has succeeded in hooking the right hon. gentleman the member for Calne [Mr. Lowe]. I know there was an opinion expressed many years ago by a member of the Treasury Bench and of the Cabinet, that two men would make a party. When a party is formed of two men so amiable—so discreet—as the two right hon. gentlemen, we may hope to see for the first time in Parliament a party perfectly harmonious and distinguished by mutual and unbroken trust. But there is one difficulty which it is impossible to remove. This

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[1] The adherents of Lowe and Horsman, seceders in 1866 from the Reform Party. John Bright said of these members that they retired to the cave of Adullam, and tried to gather round them all the discontented. The allusion is to David and his flight from Saul, who 'escaped to the cave Adullam; and every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him' (Sam. xxii. 1, 2).—Brewer, *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable.*

party of two reminds one of the Scotch terrier, which was so covered with hair that you could not tell which was the head and which was the tail of it.

The House had scarcely settled down soberly to the discussion again after the outburst of cheers and laughter with which this sally was received, when Bright turned once more on Lowe:

> The right hon. member for Calne told us that he had some peculiar election experiences. There are men who make discord wherever they appear. The right hon. gentleman on going down to Kidderminster got into some unpleasing altercation with somebody, and it ended with his having his head broken. But I am happy to say, and the House will bear witness, that with regard to its power, that head is probably as strong now as before he took his leave of Kidderminster and went to Calne—a village in the West of England.
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> The right hon. gentleman found on the list of electors at Calne one hundred and seventy-four names, of whom, according to the Blue book, about seven were working men. I suppose three or four of these were probably keepers of shops, and some of those whom the Chancellor of the Exchequer I think improperly included in his list. When the right hon. member went down there he found a tumult even more aggravated than at Kidderminster. They did not break his head, but they did something that in the eye of the law was much worse, for they shut up the police in the Town Hall, and the little mob of this little place had the whole game to themselves. The right hon. gentleman told us of the polypus, which takes its colour from the rock on which it lives, and he said that some hon. members take their colours from their constituencies. The constituency which the right hon. gentleman represents consists of one hundred and seventy-four

men, seven of whom are working men ; but the real constituent of the right hon. gentleman is a member of the other House of Parliament, and he could send in his butler or his groom, instead of the right hon. gentleman, to represent the borough. I think in one sense—regarding the right hon. gentleman as an intellectual gladiator in this House—we are much indebted to the Marquis of Lansdowne that he did not do that.

The second reading of the Bill was moved on April 12. Bright, who spoke on April 23, earnestly appealed to Tories and dissentient Liberals to permit what he described as a measure of great moderation to become law; but he appealed in vain. The second reading was indeed carried (on April 28), but only by the hopeless majority of five—318 to 313 votes. After a weary fight in committee the measure was finally defeated in June by a majority of 11 (315 to 304) on the amendment of an 'Adullamite'—Lord Dunkellin—who proposed that a £6 rating franchise should be substituted for a £7 rental;[1] Earl Russell immediately resigned, and Lord Derby became Prime Minister, with Mr. Disraeli as Chancellor of the Exchequer. During the summer, autumn, and winter there was much excitement and agitation in the country, and many great meetings were held.

The Committee of the Reform League in London proposed to hold a meeting in Hyde Park on July 23. The Home Secretary (Mr. Walpole) forbade the meeting, but the people gathered in thousands, resisted the police, broke down the railings, and entered the Park. The Home Secretary was frightened; Parliament was frightened; and Mr. Disraeli (who was not frightened, but who wished to stimulate the 'terror') made an alarmist speech in the House of Commons (where the subject came up for discussion), saying that he was not quite sure that he had still a house to go to.[1] 'The Hyde Park riot,' says Mr. Justin McCarthy, 'convinced Her Majesty's Ministers of the necessity of an immediate adoption of the reform principles.' Lord Derby had tried to induce some of the most prominent of the 'Adullamites' to join his Ministry, but without success. He had even asked Lord Clarendon to remain at the Foreign Office, but the invitation was declined. Lord Derby was of course, like the whole of the Tory Party, strongly opposed to Reform, but Mr. Disraeli, though he voted and spoke against Mr. Gladstone's Bill, had no objection to Reform, provided he could use the movement for the purpose of dishing the Whigs. There were people who thought that Lord Derby's Government, despite the fact that it had got into office by rejecting a Reform Bill, might by the manœuvres of Mr. Disraeli be persuaded to perform a *volte face* and introduce a Reform Bill of its own. Bright did not believe that this was possible, and he warned his fellow countrymen not to allow themselves to be misled by the masquerading antics of the Ministry. Speaking at Birmingham on August 27, 1866, he said:

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[1] The effect of this amendment was practically regarded as raising the proposed borough franchise from £7 to £9. See Paul, *History of Reform*, p. 196.

The Government of Lord Derby in the House of Commons, sitting all in a row, reminds me very much of a number of amusing and ingenious gentlemen whom I dare say some of you have seen and listened to. I mean the Christy Minstrels. The Christy Minstrels, if I am not misinformed, are, when they are clean washed, white men ; but they come before the audience as black as the blackest negroes, and by this transformation it is expected that their jokes and songs will be more amusing. The Derby minstrels pretend to be Liberal and white ; but the fact is if you come nearer and examine them closely you will find them to be just as black and curly as the Tories have ever been. I do not know, and I will not pretend to say, which of them it is that plays the banjo and which the bones. But I have no doubt that, in their manœuvres to keep in office during the coming Session, we shall know something more about them than we do at present ; they are in point of fact, when they pretend to be Liberal, mere usurpers and impostors. Their party will not allow them to be Liberal, and they exist only upon the principle upon which they have acted in all their past history, of resisting and rejecting every proposition of a Liberal character that has been submitted to them.

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[1] McCarthy, *History of Our Own Times*, vol. iv. p. 83.

Bright was freely attacked, in those days, by Tory speakers, and by the Tory Press, as the *fons et origo* of all the trouble and excitement, and even danger, which attended the Reform movement. In dealing with his assailants, in a speech delivered in London on December 4, 1866, he not only vindicated his own position, but vindicated the position of the reformers and agitators of all times, whose aims have been constantly misunderstood—perhaps wilfully misunderstood—by the privileged classes, who seemed to be ever incapable of realising the calamities which injustice and wrong are sure, sooner or later, to bring about, involving, it may be, in general disaster, the ruin of their own order. He said :

> These opponents of ours, many of them in Parliament openly, and many of them secretly in the Press, have charged us with being the promoters of a dangerous excitement. They say we are the source of the danger which threatens ; they have absolutely the effrontery to charge me with being the friend of public disorder. I am one of the people. Surely, if there be one thing in a free country more clear than another, it is that any one of the people may speak openly to the people. If I speak to the people of their rights, and indicate to them the way to secure them—if I speak of their danger to the monopolists of power—am I not a wise counsellor, both to the people and to their rulers ? Suppose I stood at the foot of Vesuvius or Etna, and, seeing a hamlet or a homestead planted on its slope, I said to the dwellers in that hamlet or in that homestead, 'You see that vapour which ascends from the summit of the mountain ; that vapour may become a dense black smoke that will obscure the sky. You see that trickling of lava from the crevices or fissures in the side of the mountain ; that trickling of lava may become a river of fire. You hear that muttering in the bowels of the mountain ; that muttering may become a bellowing thunder, the voice of a violent convulsion that may shake half a continent. You know that at your feet is the grave of great cities for which there is no resurrection, and history tells us that dynasties and aristocracies have passed away and their name has been known no more for ever.' If I say this to the dwellers upon the slope of the mountain, and if there comes hereafter a catastrophe which makes the world to shudder, am I responsible for that catastrophe? I did not build the mountain, or fill it with explosive materials. I merely warned the men that were in danger.

The story of the Reform Bill of 1867 is so farcical that the reader may be well excused if he refuse to believe it. Yet it is true as gospel. I shall tell it with the utmost brevity.

Mr. Disraeli was the genius of the Derby Ministry of 1866–68. I think we may easily come to the conclusion that during the discussions on Mr. Gladstone's Bill, if not earlier, he had made up his mind that a reform in the franchise was inevitable. But he played the game. He seized every opportunity to embarrass the Government of Lord Russell, to defeat their Reform Bill, and to drive them from office. Now, however, in office himself, he was determined to introduce and carry a Reform Bill of some sort or other, come what might. But how was he to manage his chief; how was he to manage his colleagues in the Cabinet; how the whole Tory Party, how the House of Commons? To place a Reform Bill on the statute book, amid the difficulties of the situation, was a task for a man of genius; but Mr. Disraeli was, we all know, a man of genius. On February 11, 1867, he announced to the House of Commons his intention of introducing a series of Resolutions forecasting the nature of the Bill which the Government intended to propose. The Resolutions which he had framed were, in the main, vague, general, and academical. They found favour with no section of the House, and were not pressed to a division.

'February 11.—Disraeli,' says Lord Malmesbury, 'laid our Reform Resolutions on the table. He dissatisfied the House by too long and ambiguous a speech.'

On February 23,[1] there was a meeting of the Cabinet.

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[1] McCarthy.

Disraeli, be it said, seems to have prepared two Reform Bills, one of a comprehensive, the other of a feeble character. Sir John Pakington, First Lord of the Admiralty, tells us that he (Sir John) was under the impression that the Cabinet were all agreed in favour of the introduction of the comprehensive Bill, but at this meeting of February 23 General Peel objected to it, saying that it was too extreme. Lord Cranborne asked General Peel to reconsider the subject before finally coming to a conclusion, and the General agreed to do so. On Sunday Lord Cranborne read the Bill carefully himself, and was scandalised to find that it proposed nothing more nor less than the establishment of household suffrage pure and simple in the boroughs, though the concession was to be hedged by safeguards in the shape of plural voting. He at once informed Lord Derby that he could not support the Bill. On Monday (25th) there was a hurried meeting of the Cabinet. Lord Cranborne said that if the Bill were introduced he would resign ; and General Peel and Lord Carnarvon threatened to take the same course. In these circumstances the comprehensive Bill was abandoned, and the feeble measure adopted, by the Cabinet. On that same afternoon Mr. Disraeli, giving up the Resolutions which he had previously laid on the table of the House, introduced the milder Reform Bill which he had had prepared, and which the Cabinet of the 23rd had hastily accepted. This Bill proposed to establish a £6 rating franchise in boroughs, and a £20 rating franchise in counties. There were also several ‘ fancy ’ franchises about which we need not trouble ourselves. The Bill was contemptuously received by the House. Disraeli saw that it had no chance, and next day he came down to the House, withdrew it, and declared that a new Bill would be introduced immediately. On March 18 he introduced a new Bill, which was nothing more nor less than the comprehensive measure which he had originally prepared ; and Lord Cranborne, Lord Carnarvon, and General Peel left the Ministry. The main provisions of the new Bill were—the establishment of household suffrage in the boroughs, conditional on two years' residence and personal payment of rates ; and the reduction of the franchise in counties to £15. Bright did not care very much for the Bill as it stood ; but he was not without hope that it might be hammered into shape in committee, and therefore ultimately resolved to support the second reading, while frankly telling Ministers what he thought of them and their Bill. Of course he recognised that Disraeli had, contrary to his expectations, turned a complete political summersault. He said :

> The Bill as a whole I regard as very unsatisfactory. It has marks upon it of being the product, not of the friends, but of the enemies of Reform. It is wonderful what clever men will do when a dozen of them are shut up in a room. Now, look at the Chancellor of the Exchequer : he is a marvel of cleverness, or else he would not have been for twenty years at the head of hon. gentlemen opposite, to lead them on to this—what shall I call it ?—great difficulty at last. Take the right hon. member who sits next to him, representing a very learned university, Cambridge [Mr. Walpole]. Take the President of the Poor Law Board [Mr. Gathorne Hardy], who represents the wisdom, and it may be, to some extent, the prejudices,

of Oxford. Take the right hon. member for Droitwich [Sir John Pakington]; I fear to speak of so potent a personage. At this very moment he directs the whole of the armies of the Empire. There is not a soldier who shivers amid the snows of Canada or who sweats under the sun of India, but shivers and sweats under the influence of the right hon. gentleman. It was only the other day he was Lord High Admiral of England. His 'march was on the mountain wave,' his 'home was on the deep.' But all these gentlemen retire into a mysterious apartment in Downing Street, and they set to work and concoct a Reform Bill; and with all their capacity, it seems to me to come out a Bill marvellously like that which would have been made by the hon. member for North Lincolnshire [Mr. Banks Stanhope], who last night gave us an account of his conversion. Anything more affecting could hardly be heard in any class-meeting. But he spoke of 'we' all this time—what 'we' did, what determinations 'we' had come to. In thinking it over to-day, I have come to the conclusion that he is the author of this Bill. It would leave the greatest question of our time absolutely unsolved. Sir, it seems to me impossible to assist a Government which will not tell us frankly what it intends, what it stands by, what it will get rid of—which asks us to go into its confidence, and yet is probably the most reticent Government that ever sat on those benches. If any gentlemen on this side were to treat you as you treated us last year, I should denounce them with the strongest language I could use. I hate the ways, I scorn the purposes of faction; and if I am driven now, or at any stage of this Bill, to oppose the Government, it is because the measure they have offered to us bears upon its face marks of deception and disappointment, and because I will be no party to any Bill which would cheat the great body of my countrymen of the possession of that power in this House on which they have set their hearts, and which, as I believe, by the Constitution of this country they may most justly claim.

The Bill was read a second time on March 27, without opposition, and amended drastically in committee. The following summary of what it was when first introduced, and of what it became before taking its place on the statute book, will give a fair idea of Mr. Disraeli's accommodating disposition on the question :

Original Bill	*Bill as Passed*
Household franchise in boroughs, conditional on *two* years' residence and personal payment of rates.	Household franchise, conditional on *one* year's residence; compound householder abolished, the occupier alone being rated.
£15 franchise in counties.	£12 franchise in counties.
Educational franchise for graduates or associates in Arts of any university of the United Kingdom, for those who passed senior middle-class examinations, for clergymen, professional men, and schoolmasters.	*No* educational franchise.
A pecuniary franchise for savings-bank depositors with balance of £50, fund-holders of like amount, and direct taxpayers to the amount of £1 per annum.	*No* pecuniary franchise.

Original Bill	*Bill as Passed*
Dual voting—a provision entitling the holder of the pecuniary franchise to vote for the same borough in respect of any franchise involving occupation of premises and payment of rates.	*No* dual voting.
Voting papers.	*No* voting papers.
No lodger franchise.	A £10 lodger franchise.
No cumulative vote or three-cornered constituencies, these being declared by Mr. Disraeli as erroneous in principle and pernicious in practice.	*Four* three-cornered constituencies.
Twenty-three towns, under 7,000 in population, to be deprived of one member; and Totnes, Reigate, Great Yarmouth and Lancaster, convicted of corrupt practices, to be disfranchised.	Thirty-five towns, below 10,000 in population, deprived of one member. Eleven boroughs ultimately disfranchised.
Fourteen of the new seats to be given to boroughs, fifteen to counties, and one to London University.	Eighteen of the new seats to boroughs, twenty-five to counties, and one to London University, one seat being afterwards given to Wales and seven to Scotland.

Original Bill	*Bill as Passed*
No third members to Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, and Leeds.	Third members given to Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham and Leeds.[1]

It will thus be seen that Mr. Disraeli gave way almost all along the line, under the pressure of the Opposition. It was no wonder that an honest Tory with convictions like General Peel should have exclaimed that there was 'nothing with less vitality than a vital point, nothing so insecure as the securities that the Bill offered, and nothing so elastic as the conscience of a Cabinet Minister.'

Bright put the matter in another way. He quoted the well-known lines of Hosea Bigelow :

> A merciful Providence fashioned them hollow,
> On purpose that they might their principles swallow.

Lord Cranborne was astonished to hear the passing of the Bill described as a Conservative triumph. . . . 'If,' he said, 'the adoption of the principles of Mr. Bright be a triumph, then the Conservative Party, in the whole history of its previous annals, had won no triumph so signal as this.' He declared that 'the monarchical principle was dead, the aristocratical principle doomed to death, and the democratic principle was triumphant.'[2]

Mr. Disraeli's own account of his operations is sublime. Speaking at a banquet at Edinburgh in October, he said : 'I had to prepare the mind of the country, and to educate—if it be not arrogant to use such a phrase—to educate our party. It is a large party, and requires its attention to be called to questions of this kind with some pressure.' *Punch's* description of the situation is excellent. Disraeli is represented as 'Puff at St. Stephen's.' He is in evening dress with a roll of paper in his left hand. On their knees before the footlights are Lord Derby, Lord Stanley, and other Ministers. 'Puff's' right hand is outstretched, the right hands of all the others are outstretched in the same way. Puff says, 'Now, pray, all together.'

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[1] Paul.

[2] *Annual Register* for 1867, p. 88.

All. Behold thy votaries submissive beg,
That thou wilt deign to grant them all they ask;
Assist them to accomplish all their ends,
And sanctify whatever means they use
To gain them!

Between 1852 and 1884 Bright had practically led the Reform movement in England, amid much opposition and many difficulties, to complete success. In 1858 he had, as we have seen, prepared a Bill proposing to establish household suffrage and vote by ballot. He was not, as he said, afraid of manhood suffrage, but it was not practicable, and he only wished to push his principles as far as they were practicable. In 1867 household suffrage was established in the boroughs. In 1872 vote by ballot was granted. In 1884 household suffrage was established in counties as well as in boroughs. 'Bright's principles,' to adopt the language of Lord Cranborne, 'were indeed triumphant.'

CHAPTER XI

THE HOUSE OF LORDS

BRIGHT had no faith in aristocratic institutions. He spoke contemptuously of peers, lay and spiritual. He said that he could never find out what good the House of Lords had done at any time. His account of the institution, in a speech delivered in 1858, must be given:

> But there is a very serious question to be decided before we can almost take a step. When you are about to reform the House of Commons, are your eyes to be turned to the House of Peers, or to the great body of the nation? The House of Peers, as you know, does not travel very fast—even what is called a Parliamentary train is too fast for its nerves; in fact, it never travels at all unless somebody shoves it. If any man proposes to reform the House of Commons just so much as and no more than will allow it to keep pace with the wishes of the House of Lords, I would ask him not to take any trouble in the matter, but just to leave it exactly where it is. If you want it to represent the nation, then it is another question; and, having come to that conclusion, if we have come to it, there is no great mystery, I think, as to the manner in which it can be brought about. The question between the peers and the people is one which cannot be evaded. It is the

great difficulty in the way of our friends at headquarters who are for Reform, but do not know how to meet it. It was the difficulty which Lord John Russell felt. Lord John Russell—I believe you may take my word for it—has probably, from association, from tradition, from his own reading and study, and from his own just and honest sympathy, a more friendly feeling towards this question of Parliamentary Reform than any other man of his order as a statesman. But, having said this, I must also say—what he, too, would say if he thought it prudent to tell all he knew—that this is the great difficulty with him. How can I reconcile a free representation of the people in the House of Commons with the inevitable disposition which rests in a hereditary House of Peers ? Now, we must decide this question. Choose you this day whom you will serve. If the peers are to be your masters, as they boast that their ancestors were the conquerors of yours, serve them. But, if you will serve only the laws, the laws of your country, the laws in making which you have been consulted, you may go on straight to discuss this great question of Parliamentary Reform.

I am not going to attack the House of Lords. Some people tell us that the House of Lords has in its time done great things for freedom. It may be so, though I have not been so successful in finding out how or where as some people have been. At least since 1690, or thereabouts, when the peers became the dominant power in this country, I am scarcely able to discover one single measure important to human or English freedom which has come from the voluntary consent and good-will of their House.

He once described a peer thus :

You know what a peer is. He is one of those fortunate individuals who are described as coming into the world ' with a silver spoon in their mouths.' Or, to use the more polished and elaborate phraseology of the poet, it may be said of him—

> Fortune came smiling to his youth and woo'd it,
> And purpled greatness met his ripened years.

When he is a boy, among his brothers and sisters, he is pre-eminent: he is the eldest son; he will be 'My Lord'; this fine mansion, this beautiful park, these countless farms, this vast political influence will one day centre on this innocent boy. The servants know it, and pay him greater deference on account of it. He grows up and goes to school and college; his future position is known; he has no great incitement to work hard, because whatever he does it is very difficult to improve his fortune in any way. When he leaves college he has a secure position ready-made for him, and there seems to be no reason why he should follow ardently any of those occupations which make men great among their fellow-men. He takes his seat in the House of Peers; whatever be his character, whatever his intellect, whatever his previous life, whether he be in England or ten thousand miles away; be he tottering down the steep of age, or be he passing through the imbecility of second childhood, yet by means of that charming contrivance—made only for peers—vote by proxy, he gives his vote for or against, and, unfortunately, too often against, all those great measures on which you and the country have set your hearts. There is another kind of peer which I am afraid to touch upon—that creature of—what shall I say?—of monstrous, nay, even of adulterous birth—the spiritual peer. I assure you with the utmost frankness and sincerity that it is not in the nature of things that men in these positions should become willing fountains from which can flow great things for the freedom of any country. We are always told that the peers are necessary as a check. If that is so, I must say they answer their purpose admirably.

In 1884 the Parliamentary Franchise Bill passed the second reading in the Commons by 340 to 210 votes. It was rejected in the Lords by 205 to 146 votes. Immediately afterwards Bright addressed a great meeting at Bingley Hall, Birmingham, and dealt roundly with their lordships. He began :

> Now, will you allow me to put a question or two to you, and in some sort to myself ? I should like to ask who and what are these peers, who take upon themselves this authority ? To look at them, if you saw them entering the House or leaving it, you would observe that they are very much like other men. They are not taller, they are not stronger, they have no claim, I believe, to be called more learned. We know that the bulk of them are not more accustomed to business, and we believe and we feel that they have less sympathy than other men with their fellow-countrymen.

Having shown the immense territorial power and influence of the peers, he continued :

> But now, when we come to the question of their position as lords—because that is what we have now to deal with—well, we call them, as you know, the Upper House—and when a Bill leaves the House of Commons it has gone up to the House of Lords, and if a Bill comes from the House of Lords it has gone down to the House of Commons. I do not know why that distinction is made. But, now, will you consider this fact : that the members of the House of Lords do not enter that House in any degree from any personal merit that attaches to them. It is not because they have performed any good or great deeds that have recommended them to the favour of their fellow-countrymen. It is not by the choice of or by the approval of their fellow-men that they become members of the House of

Peers and legislators for a great nation. It was once said in ages past—whether it was a dream or not I will not say—that the path to the temple of honour lay through the temple of virtue. But the law-making peer, he never dreams that he is going to the temple of legislative honour through the temple of virtue; but if he does not know, we all know that he goes into the temple of honour through the sepulchre of a dead ancestor. We will go a little further. When he has once entered this temple of honour, you need not be reminded that he has gone there without nomination such as your own representatives in the House of Commons must have—he has gone there without any contest with conflicting opinion in any constituency—he has gone there without any cost of labour or of money to enable him to take his seat in the legislative assembly where he appears. You will recollect, moreover, that in his case there is no dissolution of Parliament. Whatever be the list, long or short, of follies or crimes which he has committed, there is no punishment that can be inflicted upon him, as there is by a constituency upon a member who neglects or betrays them, and in point of fact there is no such thing for him as political death, for with the peer there is political immortality.

Having dwelt on the obstructive tactics of the Lords, and emphasised the fact that they had persistently opposed all measures for the benefit of the people and the progress of popular liberty, he declared that the time had come for bridling their powers for mischief, and for obliging them to bow to the will of the nation. The power of the Crown, he said, had been curbed, and it was necessary to curb the power of the Lords if the rights of the people were to be maintained. But how was the House of Lords to be dealt with? What was the remedy for the evils of its unchecked authority?

The question—which we have before us now—is this fact, that the Lords do now what the despotic monarchs did formerly ; and the question which I put to you, and from this platform to all the people of the United Kingdom, is this : Shall we submit ? Shall we submit, or curb them—curb the nobles—as our fathers curbed our kings ? Now, I may assure you that the veto of the monarch was as legal in those days, and was as much cherished by the monarch, as any despotic power could be. It was given up and abolished, but the Crown was not overturned. The Throne remained, and the Throne remained with an unimpaired dignity, and from that time to this has been held in great and just reverence by the great mass of the people of this country. Well, now, how should we curb them ? At present you know that within their own walls they are, in a sense, omnipotent. They can if they like, I believe, turn out any one of their own members in the same way that the House of Commons has turned out one of its members. They can reject a Bill sent up from the House of Commons as they rejected the Bill for the Repeal of the Paper Duty in 1860, and as they have rejected the Franchise Bill now. Now, the proposition that I should make would be this : that they should have, unimpaired, all the power they have now with regard to any Bill that has passed the House of Commons for the first time during the Session in which the Lords are called upon to deal with it. That is, in the case of this Bill they would be at liberty to amend it, and send it back to the Commons. If the Commons did not like the amendments, and would not accept them, the Bill would go back to the Lords, and if the Lords chose they might reject it. But in a second Session, if practically the same Bill was sent up to the Lords, they would then also have a right to debate and to amend ; but when the Bill came down to the House of Commons in this second Session, and the

Commons would not agree to the amendments of the Lords, then the Lords should be bound to accept the Bill.

Now, what would remain to the peerage? There would this remain—the peerage and its titles. There would be, as now, members of the House of Lords. There would remain dukes, and marquises, and earls, and viscounts, and barons, as now. They would be members of the House of Lords; but I venture to suggest, and I am sure I am correct in the opinion, that the change which I have proposed would entirely and most beneficially change the character and the conduct of the House of Lords. Remember that the dignity of the aristocratic and titled classes, apart from the question of the Lords in Parliament, would remain the same. As our forefathers abolished the veto of the Crown, and sustained and did not diminish the dignity of the Crown, so, I believe, we might limit the veto of the peers in Parliament, leaving the peers to their estates and their great advantages, and to the titles by which and under which they are now known amongst their countrymen. But the absolute power would be gone; the power of the peers in Parliament would henceforth be limited. The result would be—what? That instead of 500 peers all over the country being liable to be summoned to the House of Lords for a particular vote, as they were by the late Lord Derby in 1860, to throw out the Paper Duty Repeal Bill, and as they were three or four weeks ago by Lord Salisbury to come up and throw out this Franchise Bill—men who were not known to many in the House of Lords—men who came to the door and were not even known to the doorkeepers—if this change which I have suggested were made, that ceremony would be extinguished for ever. They would know that although they threw the Bill out now, in July or August, that the Bill could be presented to them again in the spring of next year, when its denial and its rejection would be a thing contrary to the Constitution.

In passing from this subject I shall quote the Resolutions, limiting the veto of the House of Lords, which were passed by the House of Commons in April 1910. They justify the position and the proposals of Bright:

> 1. That it is expedient that the House of Lords be disabled by law from rejecting or amending a Money Bill, but that any such limitation by law shall not be taken to diminish or qualify the existing rights and privileges of the House of Commons.
>
> For the purpose of this Resolution a Bill shall be considered a Money Bill if, in the opinion of the Speaker, it contains only provisions dealing with all or any of the following subjects, namely, the imposition, repeal, remission, alteration, or regulation of taxation; charges on the Consolidated Fund or the provision of money by Parliament; Supply; the appropriation, control, or regulation of public money; the raising or guarantee of any loan or the repayment thereof; or matters incidental to those subjects or any of them.
>
> 2. That it is expedient that the powers of the House of Lords, as respects Bills other than Money Bills, be restricted by law, so that any such Bill which has passed the House of Commons in three successive Sessions and, having been sent up to the House of Lords at least one month before the end of the Session, has been rejected by that House in each of those Sessions, shall become law without the consent of the House of Lords on the Royal assent being declared: Provided that at least two years shall have elapsed between the date of the first introduction of the Bill in the House of Commons and the date on which it passes the House of Commons for the third time.
>
> For the purposes of this Resolution a Bill shall be

treated as rejected by the House of Lords if it has not been passed by the House of Lords either without Amendment or with such Amendments only as may be agreed upon by both Houses

3. That it is expedient to limit the duration of Parliament to five years.

CHAPTER XII

PERSONAL TRAITS AND CHARACTERISTICS

John Bright was, above all things, a domestic man. He loved home life. He said of himself that it was only the strongest sense of duty which induced him to take part in public affairs. He was not ambitious; he cared little for fame and glory. But forces which he could not control impelled him to become a great figure in the State. A love of justice was born in him; sympathy with the oppressed was the very essence of his being; and a gift of oratory, as rare as was ever bestowed upon any man of ancient or modern times, was his special endowment. Morally and intellectually strong, he was called to do battle for the cause of righteousness, in his own country and in other lands, and he responded to the call. But had he followed the bent of his own inclination, he would have abided among his own people, enjoying the companionship of friends, books, and family, doing good wherever he went by his influence and example, but living far from the heat and tumult and worry of political strife.

When he was asked by Mr. Gladstone to join the Liberal Ministry of 1868 he at first refused, but finally yielded to the pressure of the Prime Minister, and became President of the Board of Trade. ‘I got my choice,’ he said, with a touch of humour, to a friend, ‘of any office—except the War Office.’

He has himself told in a speech of personal interest how he came to enter the Gladstone Ministry of 1868:

> Mr. Gladstone, soon after he proceeded to the formation of his administration, asked me to join him in the Government. I have reason to know that he made that proposition with the cordial and gracious acquiescence of Her Majesty the Queen. As you know, I had very strong grounds for refusing to change my seat and place in the House of Commons. The arguments which were used to induce me to do so were based entirely upon what was considered best for the interests of the great Liberal Party and for the public service. I was obliged to admit, on looking at those arguments from such a point of view, they were not easily to be answered. On the other hand, I could only offer arguments of a private and personal nature, though I had believed them to be unanswerable. But when the private and the personal came to be weighed against the apparent public reasons, the private and the personal yielded to the public, and I surrendered my inclination, and I may say also my judgment, to the opinions and to the judgment of my friends.
>
> Mr. Gladstone told me that he did not wish me to accept any office that was inferior in importance or in emolument to any held by any one of his colleagues; and he proposed that I should accept the position of Secretary of State for India. Now, very many of my friends have urged in times past that I should undertake this office, and not a few have expressed regret that I have not accepted it now. In a sentence,

therefore, I think it right to explain why I took the course which led to my declining such an important post. You know that twelve years ago, just before I came here, I suffered from an entire breakdown of my health, which cut me off from public labours for about two years. The Indian Department, I believe, is one of very heavy work, and I felt I was not justified in accepting it unless there was great probability of some useful result which could not be accomplished under any other chief of that office. I still retain the opinion that the views which I have expressed in times past—especially in the year 1858, when the India Government Bill was passing through Parliament—are sound, and that the time will come when it will be necessary to apply them to the government of India. But I believe that public opinion is not sufficiently advanced to allow us to adopt them, and that if I had taken that office I should have found myself unable to carry into effect the principles which I believe to be right with regard to the government of India. At the same time I will confess freely that it did not appear seemly to me, and that I should have been in a wrong place, holding the views which I have held from my youth upwards, if I had connected myself distinctly with the conduct of the great military departments of the Indian Government. Looking, therefore, at these points, I felt it my duty to decline the proposition ; and I said that if I was to accept any seat in this Government I should prefer to take the office of President of the Board of Trade.

He added in a beautiful passage :

I have not aspired at any time of my life to the rank of a Privy Councillor, nor to the dignity of a Cabinet office. I should have preferred much to have remained in that common rank of simple citizenship in which heretofore I have lived. There is a passage in the Old Testament which has often struck me as being one of great beauty. Many of you will recollect that the prophet, in journeying to and fro, was very hospitably entertained by what is termed in the Bible a Shunammite woman. In return for her hospitality, he wished to make her some amends, and he called her to him and asked her what there was he should do for her. 'Shall I speak for thee to the king,' he said, 'or to the captain of the host?'

Now, it has always appeared to me that the Shunammite woman returned a great answer. She replied in declining the prophet's offer, 'I dwell among mine own people.' When the question was put to me whether I would step into the position in which I now find myself, the answer from my heart was the same—I wish to dwell among mine own people. Happily, the time may have come—I trust it has come—when in this country an honest man may enter the service of the Crown, and at the same time not feel it in any degree necessary to dissociate himself from his own people. Some partial friends of mine have said that I have earned all this by my long services in the popular cause. They know not what they say. They would add labour to labour, and would compensate a life of service by a redoubled responsibility. I am sensible of the duty which is imposed upon me as a Minister of the Crown. It is my duty faithfully to perform that which belongs to such a position; but I have not less faithfully to act as becomes an honest representative of the people. I shall make the attempt. There are many who believe the attempt must fail. I hope that it will not fail. I will do all that I can to make it succeed. And if I should find that the two offices of which I am speaking are inconsistent or discordant, I hope at least that I shall be able to discover which of them it is right for me to surrender.

Of Bright's acceptance of office, Lord Fitzmaurice, in his able and interesting 'Life of Lord Granville,' says :

> His acceptance of office was perhaps the most striking feature in the new arrangements. It was the outward and visible sign of the definite junction between the more advanced section of the old Liberal Party and the Radicalism of the school of Mr. Cobden. The Tadpoles and Tapers of London Toryism went about asserting that none of the 'gentlemen' of the Liberal Party would associate with the great tribune of Birmingham, and Lord Derby was freely quoted by them, though without any kind of authority, as having said that the Queen would never receive Mr. Bright as a Minister. Lord Granville marked his opinion by walking down Parliament Street from the Cabinet, arm in arm with the new President of the Board of Trade, to the House on the day of the meeting of Parliament, and he piloted the new Minister on his first journey to Osborne.

Lord Granville gave an account of this journey in a lively letter written to Mr. Gladstone from Osborne on December 31, 1868 :

> My dear Gladstone,—We took charge of Bright at Waterloo. He is rapidly becoming a very loose character. He flirted violently with my wife all the way down, describing to her his wife, his family, and his home—reading verses to her, and quoting similar passages in the older poets—denouncing luncheons, and then eating enormously of mayonnaise, and drinking goblets of claret, which he declared was so light it must be 'Gladstone's.'
>
> We had a fine passage, during which he left us to ourselves, and was mean enough, I am much afraid, to

pump the open-hearted captain on the extravagances connected with the royal yacht. He was much pleased with the royal footman who was waiting for us at Cowes, and asked whether they were really hired by the length. All went well till our entry at Osborne. He was really angry with the footman at the door for transferring his carpet-bag to a man in an apron. In vain we pleaded the division of labour, the necessity of the former preserving his red coat and his white stockings from the dirt of luggage.

'If I had known the fellow was too fine to take it, I would have carried it myself.' He stayed in Lady Granville's sitting-room till past dressing time. —— came in. Nothing could be more striking than the contrast between the two men. Both a little vain, and with good reason to be so; but one so guileless in his allusions to himself, and the other showing it enveloped with little artifices and mock humility; one so intrinsically a gentleman, and so ignorant of our particular society, the other a little vulgar, but a consummate master of the ways of the *grand monde*. The combined influences of Bright's connexion with the Press, the platform, and the House of Commons, together with the great simplicity in which this combative and able man was brought up, and which he has maintained in his social and family habits, gave his conversation a singular flavour.

He told us he only informed his wife two days ago of his visit here, and of her almost reproachful answer—'It seems strange you should be going where I cannot follow.'

I called for him at dinner time; his dress was irreproachable, after he had readily agreed to take off a pair of bridal white gloves. He was rather pleased, quoted his tailor's approval of tights, and acknowledged he had promised to rehearse the costume before his wife and daughter. The beginning of dinner was awful—the Queen with a sick headache and shy; Princess Louise whispering unintelligibly in my ear, and Lady Clifden shouting ineffectually into the still more impenetrable receptacle of sound belonging to Charles Grey; Bright like a war-horse champing his bit, and dying to be at them. At last an allusion to children enabled me to tell Bright to repeat to Her Majesty his brother's observation 'where, considering what charming things children were, all the queer old men came from.' This amused the Queen, and all went on merrily. She talked to him for a long time, and the old *roué* evidently touched some feminine chord, for she was much touched with him, and saw him again the next morning.

Without unnecessary depreciation of our enemies, it is probable that she is not insensible to the charm of sincerity and earnestness.

We then retired to the Household at tea, and Bright was by no means dashed when Alfred Paget addressed the company as if through a speaking trumpet, 'Well, I never expected to see John Bright *here*, winning his money at Blind Hookey.'—Yours, G.

Of Bright at the Board of Trade Lord Eversley (who, as Mr. Shaw Lefevre, was Secretary to the Board when Bright was President) writes:

I have always looked back at my association in 1869–70 with Mr. Bright at the Board of Trade, when he was President and I was Parliamentary Secretary, with the greatest pleasure, and with a strong personal affection for him. He told me when we first met at the office that I must do most of the work, and only bring before him the more important questions. He had no experience of official work, and I gathered that he had not taken much part in the business of the manufacturing firm of which he was a partner. At the age of fifty-seven it was rather late in life to begin work at the head of a great Government department. He had a great distaste, and almost an incapacity, for wading through a bundle of official papers. It was said in the office that he did not know how to untie the tape which held them together. I don't think he often did this. I don't recollect his ever writing a minute on them. He liked me to state the case to him, and he would then discuss it fully and with practical common-sense. What he said was always of the greatest value, and his conclusions were sound and wise. Sometimes, however, before deciding he would go down to the House of Commons and discuss the matter with some friend in the smoking-room there, and it was difficult then to meet the arguments or objections of this unknown person.

I recollect that in the very first case Mr. Bright had to deal with at the Board of Trade, a deputation came before him from the Elder Brethren of the Trinity House, asking for some amendment of their charter. Mr. Bright asked me, before receiving them, what I knew about them. I told him that they were an old corporation in whom, from time immemorial, the administration of the lighthouses had been vested, subject of recent years to control over their expenditure by the Board of Trade; no one, I said, would think of creating such a body nowadays, but that, as they did their work fairly well, there was no present reason for disestablishing them. In the course of his reply to the deputation Mr. Bright, pointing to me, said, 'You see that Radical chap there; he would sweep you into the sea if he could.' He then presented himself to them as the more conservative statesman, and ended by conceding what they wanted. It amused me much to be called a 'Radical chap' by Mr. Bright, as compared with himself; but there was a certain amount of truth in the comparison, for in details of administration and in proposals for legislation Mr. Bright was distinctly conservative, far more so than I was. He objected to interference or to legislation if it could possibly be avoided. He got into trouble with the Press for a speech he made in the House of Commons objecting to a Bill which aimed at giving greater protection against adulteration.

Mr. Bright was an exceedingly pleasant chief to work under, showing the fullest confidence and consideration. He not unfrequently deferred to my views, even when disagreeing with them. In one important question, where the Board of Trade had been asked by the Foreign Office for an opinion as to the instructions to be given to our Minister in Pekin on a negotiation for a commercial treaty, after discussing the matter with me, Mr. Bright said, ‘ Well, you have given great attention to the subject and I very little, so the letter had better go to the Foreign Office as you propose, though I quite disagree.’ And so it went.

Later Lord Clarendon, who was then Foreign Secretary, sent for me to discuss the same question with him. Curiously enough he ended the discussion almost in the same words as Mr. Bright had done, and instructions were sent to the Minister in China in the terms I proposed, though both Mr. Bright and Lord Clarendon disagreed. I should add that my opinion had been formed after consultation with Lord Farrer and Sir Lewis Malet, then officials at the Board of Trade.

Mr. Bright struck me as a very good judge of men. The only important post at the Board of Trade which fell vacant while he was in office there was that of the head of the Railway Department. There were a great many applicants for it. Mr. Bright took much trouble in personally seeing many of them. He picked out from them a young lawyer, Mr. William Malcolm, who came of a well-known Tory stock. The appointment turned out a most excellent one in every respect. After some years of work at the Board of Trade Mr. Malcolm was transferred to the Colonial Office, and later was tempted to leave the Government service by an offer of partnership in Messrs. Coutts' Bank.

Mr. Bright often discussed Mr. Gladstone with me. He had the most profound admiration for his chief, and was astounded at his power of work. He could not have believed it was possible for any human being to get through so much. He said that Mr. Gladstone had a passion for work, and revelled in it for its own sake. Of himself, he said that he had no such power or liking for work. The only pleasant thing about office, he humorously added, was receiving the salary. He gave great support to Mr. Gladstone in the Cabinet. I feel certain that Mr. Gladstone had the greatest confidence in him, and appreciated his sound counsel. When Mr. Bright, in Mr. Gladstone's second administration, resigned his post on account of the military operations in Egypt, from something he said to me I thought he was rather hurt to find how little disturbed Mr. Gladstone was at losing him for a colleague. I made the observation that resignations of colleagues were to Mr. Gladstone a part of his everyday work.

I was confirmed in this view of Mr. Gladstone later, in 1884, when I was a member of his Cabinet. The period was one of great internal differences in the Government, and at several successive Cabinets resignations were tendered, and were only withdrawn after great difficulties. Mr. Gladstone dealt with these cases with imperturbable temper and calmness, as part of the business of the day. I recollect that in coming out of a Cabinet, after one of these scenes, he made the jocular observation to me that 'his colleagues seemed to be all going off at half-cock.'

Mr. Bright spent much labour in preparing his speeches. His speech, in 1869, on the Bill for disestablishing the Irish Church was one of the best he ever made. It was the subject of long thought and preparation. His great efforts were perhaps conceived in a loftier strain than Mr. Gladstone's, but he did not compare in general effectiveness—in power of debate—in all the use of rhetorical and dialectical methods. His impromptu speeches were rare, but they were not wanting in spirit and power. He gave much time to reading poetry. He often copied out lines which pleased him, and carried them about in his pocket for the purpose of committing them to memory. I thought his massive head a very noble one and his expression refined and beautiful—totally different from the version given of him in *Punch*, which always depicted him as a coarse and almost brutal demagogue. It was in this sense he was regarded for many years by the Tory Party. It was only quite late in his life in the House of Commons that the impression changed, and that even his opponents recognised his noble simplicity and refinement.

Mr. Bright's work at the Board of Trade was practically confined to one year. During the whole of the second year he was incapacitated by illness, but he retained office at the urgent entreaties of Mr. Gladstone and his colleagues, and against his own wishes. He recovered his health eventually, and was again a member of Mr. Gladstone's second administration as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, which did not entail any office work. It was a great grief to me, as to so many of his old colleagues, when Mr. Bright separated himself from Mr. Gladstone and the bulk of the Liberal Party on the subject of Home Rule for Ireland. But this difference made no change in our personal relations, as it did in so many other cases. I was among those present at his funeral, and no one mourned him more than I did.

Bright loved peace. He hated war. But in dealing with the subject of war he did not, as I have already said, discuss it on the principles of the Peace Society. He discussed it on the principles of statesmanship. His most remarkable utterance on the subject was, I think, a speech delivered at Birmingham in 1858. He said that people spoke as if the principles which he enunciated, on the question of peace and war, were something new, and peculiar to himself. But that was not so. Some of the greatest English statesmen of the past had enunciated the same principles—Walpole, Fox, Grey, Peel. The policy of English interference in foreign affairs had really begun in the wars of the Revolution. He said:

> If you turn to the history of England, from the period of the Revolution to the present, you will find that an entirely new policy was adopted, and that, while we had endeavoured in former times to keep ourselves free from European complications, we now began to act upon a system of constant entanglement in the affairs of foreign countries, as if there was neither property nor honours, nor anything worth striving for, to be acquired in any other field. The language coined and used then has continued to our day. Lord Somers, in writing for William III, speaks of the endless and sanguinary wars of that period as wars 'to maintain the liberties of Europe.' There were wars 'to support the Protestant interest,' and there were many wars to preserve our old friend 'the balance of power.'
>
> We have been at war since that time, I believe, with, for, and against every considerable nation in Europe. We fought to put down a pretended French supremacy under Louis XIV. We fought to prevent France and Spain coming under the sceptre of one monarch,

although, if we had not fought, it would have been impossible in the course of things that they should have become so united. We fought to maintain the Italian provinces in connexion with the House of Austria. We fought to put down the supremacy of Napoleon Bonaparte; and the Minister who was employed by this country at Vienna, after the great war, when it was determined that no Bonaparte should ever again sit on the throne of France, was the very man to make an alliance with another Bonaparte for the purpose of carrying on a war to prevent the supremacy of the late Emperor of Russia. So that we have been all round Europe, and across it over and over again, and after a policy so distinguished, so pre-eminent, so long continued, and so costly, I think we have a fair right—I have, at least—to ask those who are in favour of it to show us its visible result.

The industry of the people was taxed, domestic reform checked, and the prosperity of the country retarded by these wars. Treasure was squandered and blood shed without anything being gained for the advancement of human well-being and happiness.

I believe that I understate the sum when I say that, in pursuit of this will-o'-the-wisp (the liberties of Europe and the balance of power), there has been extracted from the industry of the people of this small island no less an amount than £2,000,000,000 sterling. I cannot imagine how much £2,000,000,000 is, and therefore I shall not attempt to make you comprehend it. I presume it is something like those vast and incomprehensible astronomical distances with which we have been lately made familiar; but, however familiar, we feel that we do not know one bit more about them than we did before. When I try to think of that sum of £2,000,000,000, there is a sort of vision passes before my mind's eye. I see your peasant labourer delve and plough, sow and reap, sweat beneath the summer's sun, or grow prematurely old before the winter's blast. I see your noble mechanic, with his manly countenance and his matchless skill, toiling at his bench or his forge. I see one of the workers in our factories in the north, a woman—a girl, it may be—gentle and good, as many of them are, as your sisters and daughters are—I see her intent upon the spindle, whose revolutions are so rapid that the eye fails altogether to detect them, or watching the alternating flight of the unresting shuttle. I turn again to another portion of your population, which, 'plunged in mines, forgets a sun was made,' and I see the man who brings up from the secret chambers of the earth the elements of the riches and greatness of his country. When I see all this I have before me a mass of produce and of wealth which I am no more able to comprehend than I am that £2,000,000,000 of which I have spoken, but I behold in its full proportions the hideous error of your Governments, whose fatal policy consumes in some cases a half, never less than a third, of all the results of that industry which God intended should fertilise and bless every home in England, but the fruits of which are squandered in every part of the surface of the globe, without producing the smallest good to the people of England.

But somebody gained by this policy of intervention and war. Who gained ? Bright answered this question in a well-remembered passage :

But, it may be asked, did nobody gain ? If Europe is no better, and the people of England have been so much worse, who has benefited by the new system of foreign policy ? What has been the fate of those who were enthroned at the Revolution, and whose supremacy has been for so long a period undisputed among us? Mr. Kinglake, the author of an interesting book on Eastern travel, describing the habits of some acquaintances that he made in the Syrian deserts, says that the jackals of the desert follow their prey in families like the place-hunters of Europe. I will reverse, if you like, the comparison, and say that the great territorial families of England, which were enthroned at the Revolution, have followed their prey like the jackals of the desert. Do you not observe at a glance that from the time of William III, by reason of the foreign policy which I denounce, wars have been multiplied, taxes increased, loans made, and the sums of money which every year the Government has to expend augmented; and that so the patronage at the disposal of Ministers must have increased also, and the families who were enthroned and made powerful in the legislation and administration of the country must have had the first pull at, and the largest profit out of, that patronage? There is no actuary in existence who can calculate how much of the wealth, of the strength, of the supremacy of the territorial families of England has been derived from an unholy participation in the fruits of the industry of the people, which have been wrested from them by every device of taxation and squandered in every conceivable crime of which a Government could possibly be guilty.

The more you examine this matter the more you will come to the conclusion which I have arrived at—that this foreign policy, this regard for 'the liberties of Europe,' this care at one time for 'the Protestant interests,' this excessive love for 'the balance of power,' is neither more nor less than a gigantic system of out-door relief for the aristocracy of Great Britain.

Bright condemned the view that war made trade. War made debt, and the weight of the debt often counterbalanced the profits of the trade. Peace was the only sure foundation upon which a prosperous and a Christian State could be built. That was his creed.

Bright was often attacked for his opposition to the Factory Acts. He has disposed of the subject in the following pithy letter, addressed to a gentleman who had called his attention to some criticisms of a Tory newspaper:

One Ash, Rochdale: January 1, 1884.

DEAR SIR,—I was opposed to all legislation restricting the adults, men or women. I was in favour of legislation restricting the labour and guarding the health of children. I could not therefore support Bills which directly interfered with and restricted the working hours of women, and which thus were intended to limit the working hours of men. I still hold the opinion that to limit by law the time during which adults may work is unwise, and in many cases oppressive. As to your Tory newspaper, you may remind the writer that I sought to give the workman two loaves of bread when his party wished to give him only one.

I am, truly yours,
JOHN BRIGHT.

Bright was very courteous in answering letters, no matter by whom they were written, and very willing to give information and help in reference to subjects in which he was interested, whenever his assistance was sought. A boy at Eton once wrote to him to seek his aid in discussing the question 'Whether England ought to interfere with the politics of the Continent?' The boy—now a man, Major Clive Morrison Bell—himself tells the story in a letter addressed to Mr. Reginald Smith:

Harpford House, Ottery St. Mary,
Devonshire: Dec. 16, 1909.

DEAR MR. SMITH,—Here is the letter at last. The facts are as follows:

I had just been elected to my House Debating Society, and was faced with the curiously worded conundrum, 'Whether England ought to interfere with the politics of the Continent?' on which I was told I was expected to make my maiden effort. In despair I wrote to my father, and asked him what I was to say.

In view of the very guarded reply from one of the foremost statesmen of that day (which I enclose) I think my father showed commendable discretion in answering in a way that would nowadays be described that 'he wasn't taking any.'

He, however, advised me to write to Mr. John Bright and try to enlist his sympathies in elucidating the problem.

This I accordingly must have done, as some time after the debate I received the enclosed letter written from the Reform Club, and I doubt if I ever appreciated (though as a Parliamentary candidate I do now) what a lot of trouble I must have given him, and how kind it was of him to reply.

I wish I had a verbatim account of what I actually said at the subsequent debate; it must have been funny.

Yours very truly,
CLIVE MORRISON BELL.

Bright's letter runs as follows:

Reform Club, Pall Mall, S.W.: March 14, '87.

[*Private.*]

DEAR SIR,—I am sorry I have not replied to your letter before this, and now it is too late. But in truth I could not have given you any information—facts or arguments—to assist you. The question is one which requires study and thought, and some knowledge of our history and of foreign policy from the days of William the 3rd to our own day.

But if you understand the grounds of the wars for 200 years back, you will discover how little of common-sense and common morality there has been in them; and if you can ascertain in any degree, or even imagine, what they cost our people in treasure and in blood, you will see how much we have paid and how little we have gained.

I am sorry I know no book which discusses this question fairly, but any good History will furnish you with information which will enable you to form a judgment upon it.

There must surely be something in the morality or immorality of nations as well as of individuals, and we are paying dearly for the crimes of our fathers and for our own, for we have committed very many during the reign of the Queen.

I am, very truly yours,
JOHN BRIGHT.

MR. CLIVE BELL,
Eton College, Windsor.

Bright took a keen interest in the Tichborne case. Why? it may be asked. Why should he have bothered himself about a matter of such little public importance? The answer is easy. He believed that the claimant was an impostor, striving to do a great wrong by plundering an ancient family of its inheritance. His sense of justice was awakened, and he endeavoured, so far as in him lay, to prevent people from being led astray.

While the case was proceeding, Mrs. Bright once said to some friends who had called at One Ash, 'Do not mention the Tichborne case, for if you do, he will not talk upon any other subject.' Lord Bowen (who was junior counsel for the Crown in the case) once told me that the most convincing speech made against the claimant was delivered by Bright in the House of Commons. Dr. Kenealy (then a member of the House) had given notice of a motion censuring the judges in connexion with the subject. Bright saw Bowen and practically asked the distinguished lawyer to coach him, which Bowen did with much zest. Bright went thoroughly into the case, and soon astonished Bowen by his quick and perfect mastery of it. On April 23, 1875, he addressed the House of Commons in a speech which produced a great effect both in the House and in the country. Persons frequently wrote to Bright to ask his opinion of the case, and he always readily answered their queries. In July 1875, when the claimant was undergoing his sentence at Dartmoor, Bright wrote the following letter to Mr. Mark Harrison, of Sheffield :

London, 132 Piccadilly : July 16, '75.

Sir,—You may rely upon it that Arthur Orton will not come from New Zealand. During the trials £1000 was offered for him, and nobody could produce him. It was a large bribe, and I only wonder it did not bring over a score of Ortons. *The Arthur Orton* is at Dartmoor, and nobody, I suspect, knows this better than some of those who are pretending to expect him from New Zealand.

I have read all the evidence and all the speeches of both trials, and the summing-up of the Lord Chief

Justice—this last I have read again during the last month—and I have read more than once the evidence given before the Chili Commission. I know therefore as much about the matter as you can know, and much more than is known by nine out of ten of those who are clamouring for the release of the convict at Dartmoor.

I have before me now the handwriting of the real Roger Tichborne, of the real Arthur Orton, and of the convict, and this alone is sufficient to convince any man of common-sense and observation what is the truth in the case. If you could see this handwriting, and if you could examine the evidence of the Chili Commission—the evidence of the convict's own friends to whom he referred for proof that he was what he pretended to be—you could hardly fail to be convinced that your belief in the convict is wrong and your sympathy with him wholly misplaced. I mention these two points as conclusive against him; there are many other points in the evidence on the trials which are fatal to his claims.

He seemed to know the names of two dogs, but he did not know the name of his own mother. Mr. Turville, in Australia, asked him a test question—whether his mother was stout or thin. He said, 'Stout—a tall, large woman.' It is not denied that Lady Tichborne was leanness itself. Miss Nangle said she was more like a skeleton than anything else, and this was not contradicted by anyone.

If you can believe in a man who did not know his own mother's name, and who said that his mother, who is admitted to have been leanness itself, was 'stout—a tall, large woman' when he first came forward in Australia, and when he had had no opportunity of picking up information and facts to support his case, I fear you are of that credulous nature that it must be useless to reason with you.

I can take no part in the proceedings of Mr. Whalley and his friends. To me the convict in Dartmoor is the greatest criminal that has appeared in our time; his crime has extended over many years; it is most base in character, and included in it almost every crime for which evil men are brought to punishment.

You are much impressed, I dare say, by the declarations of those who traverse the country creating agitation on this question. I must ask to be permitted to value my own judgment at least as highly as that of these persons. One of them has invested money largely in the case, and pecuniary interest is not favourable to an impartial decision; another suffers from a complaint which I call 'Jesuit on the Brain,' and this seems grievously to distort almost everything he looks at; and the third is the lawyer who failed, after a trial lasting 188 days, to convince three judges and twelve jurymen, or *any one of the judges or of the jurymen*, that his client was anything but an impostor, and a man most odious from his character and his crimes.

I shall be glad therefore if you, and such as believe with you, will not ask me to correspond further on a question about which only honest men who are in entire ignorance of the facts can, in my view, differ in opinion.

I am, yours truly,
JOHN BRIGHT.

I do not know if Bright would be considered a good letter-writer. He certainly does not reveal himself in his letters as he does in his speeches, yet in the following letter, addressed to Lord Charles Russell, we get an insight into the tenderness, sincerity, and deep sympathy with sorrow and affliction of which he was capable. Lord Charles and Bright were good friends, each holding the other in high esteem. Lord Charles's daughter had been married in 1876, and Bright was one of the guests at the wedding. Within a twelvemonth of the wedding the bride died in her first confinement. Bright wrote :

132 Piccadilly : March 19, '77.

DEAR LORD CHARLES RUSSELL,—I thank you for sending me the story of that sad day.

I was on the Continent when I saw the announcement of your loss in the *Times*. I was shocked, and I pictured to myself your sorrow and that of your circle, and in some measure I joined in it. I seem never able to dissociate fear from weddings. I have lost two sisters soon after marriage—one on the birth of her first, and the other on the birth of her second child : the succeeding fever was the cause of death. These events so affected me that I never attend a wedding ceremony without a feeling of doubt and sadness.

Believe me, I sympathise deeply with you in your affliction and hope that you have in it such consolation as the case admits of.

I am always,
Most sincerely yours,
JOHN BRIGHT.

A gentleman once wrote to Bright asking him if he would accept the office of first President of the English Republic. There is a quaint touch of humour in the reply :

Rochdale : April 7, 1872.

DEAR SIR,—Your Republican friend must not be a very desperate character if he proposes to make me first President, though I doubt if he can be a friend of

> mine. As to *opinions* on the question of Monarchy or Republicanism, I hope and believe it will be a long time before we are asked to give our opinion ; our ancestors decided the matter a good while since, and I would suggest that you and I should leave any further decision to our posterity. Now, from your letter I conclude you are willing to do this ; and I can assure you I am not less willing.

Bright was intimately acquainted with Mr. Charles Tennant, and used often to drop in to see him at his residence in Richmond Terrace, Whitehall. Mr. Tennant's daughter, afterwards Lady Stanley, has pleasant recollections of the great orator and statesman. She says:

> My father and John Bright were great friends, and Mr. Bright called constantly to see us throughout his life. I used to love to look at him and to hear him talk. Of course I did not understand what he said, but his voice and manner and face and everything about him had a fascination for me—I was simply in love with him. I remember one thing that happened when I was quite a little girl about eight or ten. I knew that Mr. Bright was coming to see my father, and I thought that my father would not allow me to remain in the room to hear them talk, so I determined to get under the sofa, and so listen to Mr. Bright. Well, they both sat on the sofa, and after a time things got a bit uncomfortable for me, for the sofa began to bend under their weight, and I had to dodge and creep about to escape getting crushed. In wriggling about in this way I pushed my feet out from under the sofa. The conversation suddenly ceased and Bright said, 'Why, Mr. Tennant, there is something under the sofa. Look!' and so my father pulled me out and they both laughed, and I said that

'I wanted to hear Mr. Bright talk, and that that was the reason I got under the sofa.'

I remember another day, when I was something older, that Mr. Bright called at the house and everybody was out. When the servant opened the door he told Mr. Bright that no one was at home. I was upstairs. I asked the servant who had called. He said, 'Mr. Bright,' whereupon I dashed away from the maid who was attending to my toilet, rushed down the stairs and ran into the street, following Mr. Bright as fast as I could. I got up with him just as he was entering Palace Yard. I put my hand into his arm and swung him right round, and said, 'Now, you must come back with me. I know you called and they said everybody was out, but I was not out.' He laughed and came back with me, and then I gave him tea and he talked away to me. In 1869 Mr. Bright sent me a present of Whittier's poems, and there it is—handing me the volume, with Bright's letter to her father on the occasion fastened into it. The letter ran as follows:

Board of Trade, S.W.: June, 29, '69.

DEAR MR. TENNANT,—Thank you for your kind offer. I am going down to Wakefield this evening only to return on Friday, and therefore cannot accept it. I admire Whittier's poems greatly; he has more influenced the American mind of late years than any other of their Poets.

I hope the little Book will give pleasure to your daughter. There is nothing in it that is not good and pure.

I am glad to hear that your dear invalid is better.

I am always, sincerely yours,

JOHN BRIGHT.

Lady Stanley has related the following incident about Bright in a letter addressed to the *Times* on December 20, 1909:

> John Bright frequently called on us on his way to the House of Commons. He seldom would take tea, preferring to pocket two or three lumps of sugar. One day, however, I handed him a very hot cup of tea; we were discussing the House of Lords, and I asked him, 'Now, Mr. Bright, what do we want with a House of Lords?'
>
> He made no reply, but carefully poured the hot tea into his saucer to cool it.
>
> Impetuously I repeated my question, whereupon the great Liberal statesman, smiling, gently tapped his finger on the saucer and said, 'This is the House of Lords.'

> Bright [says one of his friends] was a very homely man. He liked to be quite alone, or with the most intimate friends. I knew him from about 1869 to the time of his death, and we were great friends. He used to stop with me every year for some months. I used to take a house somewhere in Scotland, and he would come to me for the fishing. He liked me because he supposed that I was an honest man and I was in the habit of saying what I thought; and he came to me because he knew that I would have nobody in the house but himself; in fact, that I would keep people away from him. He was fond of reading aloud. He used to read for us Milton and other books which I forget. I remember that one time when he was staying with us, there was an article in, I think, the *Quarterly Review* on Oratory, and many of the illustrations were taken from Bright's speeches. I brought the magazine home. I said to Bright, 'Here is the *Quarterly Review*, Mr. Bright, and there is an article in it which will, I am sure, interest you.' 'What is it about?' he asked. I said, 'It is an

article on Oratory, and there are a great many quotations from your speeches.' 'Ah, yes,' he said, 'that will interest me. Give it to me.' I then gave him the article, and he sat in an armchair and read it aloud, quotations and all. It was very fine. I thought he read the quotations from his own speeches splendidly. He liked going quietly about the house. He liked the feeling of being alone and having no one to interfere with him. He did not like Tories and the aristocracy. He used often to use strong language about them. I am not a politician myself, and I used not to agree with Mr. Bright's prejudices in this respect. I could not get him to meet Tories and members of the aristocracy.

I once had a house in Scotland, and —— [a Tory magnate] was living near me. Bright was coming to stay with me, and —— knew it. Lady —— said to me that she heard Mr. Bright was coming to stay with us, and that she and her husband would like to meet him. 'Of course,' she said, 'we don't like his politics, but we admire his oratory and admire him, and we should like to make his acquaintance.' I promised that I would bring Bright to see them when he came. I told Bright on his arrival. 'I won't go,' said he. 'But you must,' said I; 'I have promised to take you.' 'I don't care,' said he; 'I won't go.' I explained to him that this would place me in an awkward position, but it was no use. He said I ought to have made no promise about him. One day I ordered the carriage and determined, if I could, to drive him to the ——s'. He and I drove off. After a time he asked, 'Where are you driving to?' I said, 'I am going to call on ——.' 'Then,' said he, 'you must drop me in the middle of the road; I won't go.' And so, of course, we returned without making our call. I induced him, however, to call on a distinguished Tory Duchess. They talked together for a long time.

When we were coming away, the Duchess said to me behind the door, 'Mr. Bright is a very nice man.' As we drove off, Bright said, 'A nice woman that,' pointing his thumb in the direction of the house. His prejudices were very strong. I once had an old Jacobite house in Scotland; I took Bright for a walk in the grounds. I said, 'Do you see that tree?' 'Yes,' said he. 'Well,' I said, 'that tree was planted in 1745 by Prince Charlie himself.' 'It is not any the better for that,' said Bright.

He was a very stubborn man. When he put his foot down, he never could be induced to take it up. He was very fond of fishing, but he knew nothing about fishing. He could never be persuaded to hold the rod properly. He used always to hold it straight out as a coachman holds a whip. He scarcely ever caught anything. But he enjoyed himself, standing on the bank of a river or sitting in a boat, waiting calmly.[1] He liked solitude.

I don't think he cared for public life. I think it was only a strong sense of duty that led him to take part in public affairs. When the first Ministry of which he was a member was formed, I remember lunching with him. He said, 'I don't care for this kind of thing. I don't want to be in the Ministry.' I said, 'But you must take your part, Mr. Bright.' 'Well, yes,' he said, 'that's what they say. I have my choice of anything but the War Office or the Premiership.'

Bright did not like crowds. Sometimes when he used to come to me, crowds would gather at the railway station to see him. He used to make his way rather rudely, I thought, through the crowd to the carriage, and drive off.

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[1] Lady Dorothy Nevill delicately suggests that though Sir Alexander Cockburn was devoted to shooting, he seldom hit anything.—*Reminiscences*, p. 88.

Lord Russell of Killowen told me that though Mr. Forster was very fond of whist, he was an indifferent player. On one occasion his partner (an expert player) rated him soundly for his blunders. Forster having endured much, at length broke forth, 'Well, call me *Buckshot*, and have done with it.'

He was very different to Mr. Gladstone in that respect. Gladstone liked to be noticed. He liked crowds. I used to go with Bright to Millais, when his picture was being painted. He was a great trouble to Millais; he would not keep quiet, or do as he was told. He would keep getting out of the chair, walking to the painting, looking at it, saying, 'It is not a bit like'; and then going back to the chair, asking how much longer he was to remain, and suddenly getting up and saying he would not stop any longer. I think his picture by Millais was a failure, and it was his fault. He was so impatient and restless. He did not give Millais a chance.[1] Mr. Gladstone was very different. He sat patiently, and did as he was told. One day Millais asked me to come to his studio to meet Gladstone. I went. I was struck by the difference between him and Bright. Gladstone was as oratorical in private as he was in public. Bright, on the other hand, was quiet, and spoke in a low conversational tone. He had a beautiful voice, I think.

Bright was homely and simple, as I say. He used always to shake hands with my coachman (an old servant) when he came and went. He was that kind of man. I saw Bright some time before his death at the Reform Club. He said, 'I am not well, and I am going to leave public life. I have lost my nerve, and can no longer address public meetings. We shall take a house together somewhere, and live quietly and fish.' Shortly afterwards he left London, and never returned.

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[1] Sheridan was once asked if he had ever undergone an operation. He replied, 'Never, except when sitting for my picture or having my hair cut.' It is quite clear that Bright regarded 'sitting for his picture' much in the same light as Sheridan did.

'Bright did not like crowds.' He was not fond of public speaking. He wished to be alone. But he was ever ready to subordinate his own feelings and inclinations to those of others, whenever a friend was to be obliged or a useful purpose served.

In 1883 Bright was staying at Gawthorpe, the Lancashire residence of Sir Ughtred Kay-Shuttleworth (now Lord Shuttleworth). Many of the country people were anxious to see him, but he did not want to see any one. One day Sir Ughtred told him that some people wished to see him, and asked him if he would meet them if they called on the morrow. Bright said, 'Yes.' He thought that just a few persons would call, but when the morning came there were a thousand persons gathered outside the house. Bright looked through the window and saw them. 'I suppose,' he said to Lady Kay-Shuttleworth, 'I had better say something to them.' He saw a large chair in the hall, and said, 'Perhaps that had better be brought out and I will stand on it.' Before speaking he asked Sir Ughtred if there were any local questions on which it might be useful for him to say something. Sir Ughtred said that there was some slight temporary trouble about strikes in the neighbourhood, and that it might be useful for him to say something on the matter. Bright then mounted the chair and delivered a brief and effective speech. He said many things which were not palatable to his audience, but were serviceable in allaying public irritation and promoting tranquillity in the neighbourhood.

While staying at Gawthorpe he read the following entry in Lady Kay-Shuttleworth's autograph book:

What is the resemblance between a game of whist and the Egyptian Campaign ?
Turkey shuffled.
Arabi cut.
England led—played the deuce.
France played the Knave.
France lost the game.
France wanted to divide the honours.

Bright wrote in the margin, after the words ‘ England led—played the deuce ’ : ‘ True enough. J. B.’

Bright did not care for social gatherings, but he had to endure them. He had a particular aversion to weddings ; but he had sometimes to assist at those depressing functions. A lady who sat by him at a wedding breakfast has told me the following story :

When the breakfast was nearly over Bright said to me, ‘ I hope that they will not have any of that vulgar tomfoolery of speech-making at this wedding.’ A few minutes afterwards a servant came to Bright with a request from the head of the house that he would propose the health of the bride and bridegroom. Bright seemed annoyed, and after a while left the room. He was away for about twenty minutes. He then returned, and sat by my side, placing a card, with notes on it, on a wineglass. Then he rose and made a charming speech from the notes. In the course of the speech he told this story. The question of married women’s property was occupying the public mind at the time, and steps were being taken for the introduction of a Bill for its protection. Bright’s daughters tried to get signatures to a petition in favour of the Bill at Rochdale. They brought the petition to two spinsters (sisters) belonging to the working class. One of the sisters said, ‘ Oh ! we won’t sign it. We are not married, and we have not any interest in the matter.’

The other sister said, ‘Well, I think we ought to sign it. It is true that we are not married, but then we ought to help them as is so unfortunate.’

Bright liked punctuality in all things—in social matters as well as in business affairs. Upon one occasion he was dining at Mr. Potter’s, and a lady and gentleman arrived late for dinner. Bright sat next the lady. He said apropos of nothing, ‘There are two unpardonable sins—one writing an illegible hand, and the other being late for dinner.’

Bright was very fond of children. ‘His smile was always beautiful when he was with children,’ one of his relatives said to me. He used sometimes to tell good stories about children. On one occasion he spoke to a lady at dinner about the general statement that women were more tender-hearted than men, and said that he remembered once seeing two children, a boy and a girl, playing together. Suddenly the girl burst out crying. He went up to comfort her, and found that the boy was playing with some worms. He said to the girl, ‘He is a cruel boy; I suppose he is killing the worms.’ ‘No,’ said she, still crying, ‘that ’s not it, but he won’t let me kill them.’ Generally he was fond of telling humorous stories to illustrate an argument. The story of the ‘two bloody ducks’ is well known. He told it apropos of the troubles of the English in Egypt in 1883 and 1884. A hardened criminal was tried at the Old Bailey for stealing a pair of ducks. It was a clear case, and he was found guilty. On being asked if he had anything to say why sentence should not be passed upon him, he replied, ‘I have only to say, my lord, that I am perfectly innocent. I am as innocent as any man in court. I am as innocent as your lordship—but I wish I never saw them two bloody ducks.' His story of the recalcitrant juryman apropos of Mr. Roebuck's peculiar temperament must be quoted. In an Irish debate Mr. Roebuck ascribed to the Irish member—John Francis Maguire—words which he had never used, and then contradicted them. Bright said :

> I said the other day that the hon. and learned gentleman [Mr. Roebuck] was always ready to contradict everybody. He gets up now, and not only contradicts my hon. friend, but makes him make a speech he never made—and then he contradicts that. He reminds me of a case I saw the other day in the newspapers, in which a man objected to serve on a jury. The judge said he was wrong in making the objection, because every man should be willing to serve as a juror, and therefore he could not excuse him. The man then said, 'I am not fit to be a juryman, for never in my whole life was I able to agree with any one.' But the judge encouraged him to act, and told him he should serve as a juryman. He then said that was not his only infirmity, for he had discovered that he was not able to agree with himself.

I have already said that people who interrupted Bright in the course of a debate generally got the worst of it, and I gave an illustration of the fact.[1] I shall give another illustration. He was speaking on the question of public expenditure for the purpose of increasing the fortifications of the country. He said, 'I want to know by whom this expenditure was urged ; was it by a united Cabinet ? As to the military authorities, I have looked into their recommendations, and I confess I am amazed at the absolute stupidity——' At this point there was ironical laughter. He paused for an instant, and then added, 'If you want a word less offensive, I would say the absolute lunacy of the military authorities in regard to this question.' And he added that Sir Robert Peel once said that if you were to follow the advice of military authorities on all matters relating to national security, you would overwhelm the country with taxes in time of peace.

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[1] See *ante*, p. 106.

Bright was fond of reading. He loved poetry; and his favourite studies were biography and history. The Bible and Milton were doubtless the books he liked best. But his tastes were catholic, and he would recite at call stanzas from 'Childe Harold,' or Shelley's 'Mask of Anarchy' (which, I believe, he first heard repeated by Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth) as well as pages from 'Paradise Lost.' He did not like Shakespeare. He told Lord Charles Russell that the coarseness of the great English dramatist disgusted him.

Bright read aloud and recited beautifully, and was always ready to indulge in the art.

> 'During the struggles over the Reform Bill of 1866,' says Mr. McCarthy, 'Bright used to come to the *Morning Star* office almost every night, to tell me how the debates were going, and offer some suggestions as to the way in which this or that point of the controversy ought to be treated.[1] Often and often, when he had given his views

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[1] It is well known that Bright took a keen interest in the *Morning Star*—an advanced Liberal paper, edited at this time by Mr. McCarthy.

on these subjects, he relapsed into some talk about Milton, and sometimes declaimed a few lines from his favourite poet, with a melody and majesty of voice and intonation which, all unstudied as his manner was, I have seldom heard equalled from pulpit or stage. It was a genuine pleasure to hear Bright quote from any poet he loved, but more especially from Milton. One strange thing was that, with all his devotion to Milton, his rapture about Milton, he never allowed his own simple Anglo-Saxon style to be affected in the least by any of Milton's Hellenised or Latinised turns of expression.'

Apropos of his admiration for Milton, I may quote the following extract from his address at the opening of a free library in Birmingham in 1882:

Some years ago—I dare say it is twenty years ago—on the invitation of two friends of mine, I was spending a fortnight in Sutherlandshire, on the Helmsdale river, engaged in the healthful occupation of endeavouring to get some salmon out of it. . . . In the course of the day, walking down the river, we entered the cottage of a shepherd. There was no one at home, I think, except the shepherd's wife or mother—I forget which, but she was an elderly woman, matronly, very kind and very courteous to us. Whilst we were in the house I saw upon the window-sill a small and very thin volume, and I took the liberty of going up to it, and, taking it in my hand, I found, to my surprise and delight, that it was an edition which I had never met with before, or since—an edition of 'Paradise Regained'—the work of a poet unsurpassed in any country or in any age, and a poem which I believe great authorities admit, if 'Paradise Lost' did not exist, would be the finest in our language. I said I was surprised and delighted down in this remote country, in this solitary house, in this humble abode of this shepherd, to find this volume which seemed to me to transfigure the cottage. I felt as if that humble dwelling was illumined, as it was, indeed, by the genius of Milton. . . . Now, whenever I think of some of the rivers of Scotland, when I think of the river Helmsdale, if I turn, as my mind does, to that cottage, I always see, and shall never forget, that small, thin volume which I found on the window-sill, and the finding of which seemed to me to lift the dwellers in that cottage to a somewhat higher sphere.

Mr. McCarthy continues:

I heard him quote with exquisite feeling the line from Wordsworth's poem which asked whether the cuckoo is a bird 'or but a wandering voice.' I may say, too, that he delighted in Shelley's poem 'To a Skylark,' and Logan's lines 'To the Cuckoo.'[1] Of the three poems—that of Wordsworth, that of Shelley, and that of Logan—he liked Logan's the best, as a whole; but the particular line from Wordsworth which I have mentioned held his fancy more than anything else in the three. I shall never forget the manner in which he quoted the words 'or but a wandering voice,' giving them additional expression and meaning by a quick gentle moving of his hand here and there, as if to indicate the places from which the wandering voice made itself successively heard.

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[1] 'Sweet bird! thy bower is ever green,
Thy sky is ever clear;
Thou hast no sorrow in thy song,
No winter in thy year!

'O could I fly, I'd fly with thee!
We'd make, with joyful wing,
Our annual visit o'er the globe,
Companions of the Spring.'

It is said that the real author of these lines is Michael Bruce, not Logan. See the *Works of Michael Bruce*, edited with memoir and notes by the Rev. A. B. Grosart, Edinburgh, 1865.

Upon one occasion in the House of Commons he repeated to Mr. G. W. E. Russell a long poem, in eight-syllabled lines, about the First Advent; the burden of which was that Our Lord might have come as a king to claim obedience, or a warrior to enforce His doctrine by resistless armies, but that He had elected to come poor and humble, an apostle of peace, satisfied that His doctrines could be established by moral precept, without the aid of the sword. Mr. Russell said that this poem was not much in itself, but that, recited by Bright, it was magnificent. Bright could not give Mr. Russell the name or author of the poem. He said that he had seen it in some miscellany long years ago and had committed it to memory, not on account of the merit of the lines, but of the beauty and the truth of the idea. One day Mrs. Kay, the widow of the distinguished publicist Joseph Kay (and the daughter of Thomas Drummond), called on Bright at his apartment in Piccadilly in reference to a preface which he was writing for her husband's book, 'Free Trade in Land.' The subject of poetry was incidentally mentioned, whereupon Bright wandered away from the subject in hand and took up some books of poetry and read for her. When visiting at Fredley, Surrey (the country house of the late Mrs. Drummond), he used frequently to read aloud to the company. Whenever he read anywhere lines which appealed to his sense of beauty or sense of humour he immediately wrote them down on a slip of paper and carried the paper about with him, taking it out of his pocket from time to time, to read the lines and commit them to memory. Poetry was his passion; and assuredly it is not too much to say that there are many passages in his speeches which are simply prose poems.

As an orator Bright stands in the first place. Opinions may vary, and do no doubt vary, upon the question whether in this respect he was the inferior or superior of Mr. Gladstone, but every one agrees that he had no other equal—no other rival—among the public speakers of his own day. Matthew Arnold says:

> I heard Bright to perfection [at a public dinner at Birmingham, October 29, 1858]. The company was dismally obscure, the dinner abominably bad, the speaking—all but his—unutterably wearisome; but his speech made amends. He is an orator of almost the highest rank—voice and manner excellent; perhaps not quite flow enough—not that he halts or stammers, but I like to have sometimes more of a *rush* than he ever gives you. He is a far better speaker than Gladstone.[1]

In his Diary, quoted in the 'Life of Bishop Wilberforce,' Lord Carlisle says:

> April 19, 1859.—We talked of Parliamentary speakers. The Bishop [Wilberforce] quite agrees with me in putting Gladstone first in the present House of Commons, and Bright second. We both, too, put Lord Derby first in the Lords; he said Brougham did not rate him high.

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[1] *Letters.*

Bright took infinite pains in the preparation of his speeches. He thought out the subject night and day, sometimes committed the peroration and other important passages to memory, though in the main he trusted to the inspiration of the moment for the words in which to clothe his ideas. While engaged in the work he was nervous, silent, reserved, keeping much apart and avoiding all occasions of interruption and distraction. When the speech was delivered he was himself again. Upon one occasion he gave Mr. G. W. E. Russell some 'hints' about speech-making.

'Of course,' says Mr. Russell, 'I cannot pretend to recall what he said verbally, but it was like this: "You can't prepare your *subject* too thoroughly; but it is easy to *over-prepare* your *words*. Divide your subject into two or three—not more—main sections. For each section prepare an 'island,'—by this I mean a carefully prepared sentence to clinch your argument. Make this the conclusion of the section, and then trust yourself to swim to the next island. Keep the best island for the peroration of the speech, and then at once sit down." '

Bright wrote to a correspondent in 1888:

As to modes of preparation for speaking, it seems to me that every man would readily discover what suits him best. To write speeches and then to commit them to memory is, as you term it, a double slavery, which I could not bear. To speak without preparation, especially on great and solemn topics, is rashness, and cannot be recommended. When I intend to speak on anything that seems to me important, I consider what it is that I wish to impress upon my audience. I do not write my facts or my arguments, but make notes on two or three or four slips of notepaper,[1] giving the line of argument and the facts as they occur to my mind, and I leave the words to come at call while I am speaking. There are occasionally short passages which for accuracy I may write down, as sometimes also —almost invariably—the concluding words or sentences may be written.

This is very nearly all I can say on this question. The advantage of this plan is that, while it leaves a certain and sufficient freedom to the speaker, it keeps him within the main lines of the original plan upon which the speech was framed, and what he says, therefore, is more likely to be compact and not wandering and diffuse. Forgive me if I say no more.

On one occasion he said to Sir Richard Tangye:

Don't speak unless you have something to say. Don't be tempted to go on after you have said it. Use the simplest words, bring out the consonants well (the vowels will take care of themselves), and let every sentence, as far as possible, be complete in itself.[2]

Bishop Wilberforce wrote in his Diary for May 29, 1867: 'Dined Gladstone's: Spencer, Lord Cowper, Bright, Glynne, and Adam. Bright talked a great deal. Studies his speeches; prepares his illustrations and quotations. Had prepared both *Cave* and *Dog*.'

This last sentence refers to Bright's famous allusion (during the debates on the Reform Bill of 1866) to the 'Cave of Adullam' and the 'Scotch Terrier,' anent the position of Horsman and Lowe. I have

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[1] The facsimile shows two slips of notepaper, in Bright's handwriting, found by a reporter, on a table, at a public meeting which had been addressed by Bright.

[2] Stuart Reid, *Life of Sir Richard Tangye*.

"As Bees, on flowers alighting, cease their hum,
So, settling into places, Whigs are dumb."

"'Tis Jehovah's plan
That only manhood here makes a man".

"~~Contentment sits b~~
"Content sits basking on the cheek of toil".

"The grave's not dug where traitor hands shall lay,
In fearful haste, thy murdered corse away".

If we profess to be, even with imperfect & faltering steps, the followers of Him who declared it His Divine mission "to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, & recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised," - must we not reject with indignation & horror any ~~allegiance~~ alliance & any friendship with a power based on human bondage, & on the overthrow & extinction of the dearest rights of the most helpless of mankind?

If we are the friends of freedom, personal & political, can we withhold our sympathies from a Govt. & a people with whom the white man has always been free, & who now offer an equal freedom to the black?

already quoted[1] the passage, but I shall repeat it here, in order that what follows may be made clear at a glance. Bright said :

> The right hon. gentleman [Mr. Horsman] . . . has retired into what may be called his political Cave of Adullam, and he has called about him every one that was in distress, and every one that was discontented. The right hon. gentleman has been anxious to form a party in this House, . . . and at last the right hon. gentleman has succeeded in hooking the right hon. gentleman the member for Calne [Lowe]. I know there was an opinion expressed many years ago that two men would make a party. When a party is formed of two men so amiable—so discreet—as the two right hon. gentlemen, we may hope to see for the first time in Parliament a party perfectly harmonious, and distinguished by mutual and unbroken trust. But there is one difficulty which it is impossible to remove. This party of two reminds me of the Scotch terrier, which was so covered with hair that you could not tell which was the head and which was the tail of it.

Referring to this speech, Bishop Wilberforce is reported to have said to Bright, 'Surely you do not *always* prepare your illustrations. When you used that famous one of the dog, you had been suddenly attacked, and it was impossible that you could have prepared it.' Bright replied, 'It is true all the same. I had prepared it for a former speech, but while I was speaking I looked at Lowe and my heart melted and I left it out ; but when on the occasion he attacked me, then I had no pity and *I gave him the dog*.'

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[1] *Ante*, p. 187.

Perhaps one of the most beautiful images in any of Bright's speeches was the allusion to the 'Angel of Death,' in the speech on the Crimean War.[1] Mrs. McLaren (Bright's sister) said to me, in reference to this subject, that Bright had once talked to her about it, expressing his surprise that the allusion had produced such an extraordinary effect. 'It came to me,' he said, 'very simply and naturally. I was lying awake in bed in the morning, thinking of my speech and of all the calamities which the war had brought about, when suddenly the idea, without being sought for by me, flashed upon my mind. I did not think anything more about it except that it was true, and I was surprised at the effect which it produced on the House of Commons.'

While in the main Bright carefully prepared his orations, he could on occasion deliver an effective extempore speech. He seems to have delivered two such speeches on the Burials Bill—one in 1875, and one in 1880; both produced a profound effect upon the House of Commons. His account of a Friend's burial in the former speech was listened to with deep feeling. He said:

> I will take the case of my own sect, and try to draw an argument from that. We have no baptism; we do not think it necessary. We have no service—no ordered and stated service—over the dead. We do not think that necessary. But when a funeral occurs in my sect, the body is borne with as much decency and solemnity as in any other sect or in any other case to the graveside. The coffin is laid by

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[1] *Ante*, p. 107.

the side of the grave. The family and friends and the mourners stand around, and they are given some time—no fixed time ; it may be five minutes or ten, or even longer—for that private and solemn meditation to which the grave invites even the most unthinking and the most frivolous. If any one there feels it his duty to offer any word of exhortation, he is at liberty to offer it. If he feels that he can bow the knee and offer a prayer to Heaven, not for the dead, but for those who stand around the grave, for comfort for the widow or for succour and fatherly care for the fatherless children, that prayer is offered. Well, but if this were done in one of your graveyards—if, for example, such a thing were done there, and a member of my sect, or a Baptist, an Independent, or a Wesleyan came to be interred in one of your graveyards, and if some God-fearing and good man there spoke some word of exhortation, or on his knees offered a prayer to God, is there one of you on this side of the House or on that, or one of your clergymen, or any thoughtful and Christian man connected with your Church, who would dare in the sight of Heaven to condemn that, or to interfere with it by force of law ?

In the course of this speech he made use of the following words which, at the time, gave offence to members of the Church of England : ‘ Some one will say that in Scotland they do not care about these things, because their ground is not—what do they call it ? — is not consecrated.’ Nearly two years afterwards (November 1877) Dr. Magee, the Bishop of Peterborough, in referring to these words, said :

It was my fortune, or misfortune, to have been in the gallery of the House when Mr. Bright was delivering what appeared to me to be an exquisitely beautiful and touching speech upon a sorely vexed question—the Burials Bill. I never heard a speech more full of pathetic beauty and power; but when speaking on this subject it occurred to the great orator to stop and to sneer at the observances of the Church of England, and, speaking of his own burial-grounds, to say, 'They have not been—what do they call it?—consecrated.' I confess, when I heard that, it seemed to me to be an unworthy jeer, unworthy of the speaker, unworthy of the subject, and unworthy of the place—a jeer at the cherished religious feelings and observances of many who stood around him.

Bright wrote to the Bishop in reply:

I have read your speech, and write to make one correction in it. You refer to my speech on the Burials Bill, to which you give too much praise, but you condemn what you term the 'sneer' intended in my mention of the ceremony of 'consecration.' I assure you there was no sneer intended. The speech was entirely unpremeditated. I had no intention of speaking on the question when I went down to the House, and what I said arose from feelings excited during the debate. When I came to the word 'consecration,' it entirely escaped me, and for the moment I could not recall it. In my difficulty I turned to my friends on the bench near me, and said, 'What is it called?' or 'What do they call it?' One or more of them answered, 'Consecration,' and one or more laughed, I suppose at my ignorance or forgetfulness, and this laugh, which was somewhat ill-timed, made that seem a sneer which was never so intended by me.

This charge has been made against me more than once, but always, I think, in party newspapers, to which I did not think it needful to reply; but coming from you, I write now to correct an error and misrepresentation which perhaps I ought to have corrected before.

In the speech delivered in 1880 Bright made an effective appeal to churchmen. He said:

> What are the sentiments of the people, men and women, and all persons, with regard to the spot of ground where their nearest relatives lie buried? What does a man think of the little plot where his wife lies; the widow, of the plot where her husband lies; the parents, where some innocent children that have been taken from them lie; or the children, when they remember the place where their parents are buried? Is there not an attachment to that place—a sympathy with it—something that one can never express in words—beyond what you will find in the minds of all of us with regard to any other plot of ground on the face of the earth? I knew a poor man—a very old man now—I think he is ninety. I think he boasts he is the oldest man in the town in which I live, and he is as proud of his age as it is possible to be. I have heard that he, after the loss of his wife, perhaps twenty years ago, walked two miles every Sunday for years to the cemetery where his wife was buried. There he went to think of her he had lost; to shed a tear, probably, over her grave; to offer a prayer in the hope that the separation was only temporary, and that as he grew older the time during which they would be separated would be every day shortened. Well, if this grave was in one of your churchyards, and if he were a Dissenter, his affection for that place of burial would be just as great as if it had been in a cemetery or in a Dissenting chapel-yard; and you would find that he would visit it; his affections would linger round it; he would be, no doubt, lured, time after time, to visit the burial-place, and enter your

church; and if he did not become a member of your church, and one of your constant congregation, it would be absolutely impossible that he could be hostile to it.[1]

Going into the division lobby afterwards with Mr. Pennington, Mr. Pennington said, 'Well, Mr. Bright, you "broke" the House to-night.' Bright replied, 'Well, I did not intend to speak at all.'

Bright certainly had not the 'flow' of Gladstone. But his dignified bearing, his beautifully modulated voice, the varied tones of which served so well to express the sentiments which inspired him, and his perfect mastery of the purest and noblest English ever spoken, have given him an unrivalled pre-eminence among the orators of his nation. Bright was more than a great orator. He was a great moral force. Indeed, the distinguishing characteristic of his speeches is perhaps rather their moral strength than even their oratorical grandeur. Those who have listened to Bright, and those who read his speeches to-day, will feel that this is the impression they make. Bright believed in the moral law; he thought that the world ought to be governed by the moral law; and he preached the doctrine that crimes could not be made virtues because they were committed by sovereigns and statesmen. His creed was, in truth, summed up in a single sentence: 'I most devoutly believe that the moral law was not written for men alone in their individual character, but that it was written as well for nations.'[2]

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[1] House of Commons, August 12, 1880. On this occasion the second reading of the Bill was carried by 258 to 79, and the measure soon became law.

[2] Bright, *Speeches*.

CHAPTER XIII

LAST DAYS

ON March 28, 1888, John Bright made his last appearance in public. It was at Birmingham, on the occasion of a banquet given to Mr. Chamberlain on his return from a mission to the United States of America, in reference to the differences between that country and Canada on the subject of commercial relations. As this was the last speech delivered by Bright, and as it touches upon questions of living interest—Tariffs, House of Lords, Imperial Federation, Foreign Policy—I shall set out the greater portion of it.

Take the question of commerce between the two countries. If you were in the extreme east of the Dominion of Canada, with your back to the Atlantic, and you looked straight across the Continent to the Pacific, you would have an imaginary line of nearly 3000 miles in length. On the right, the north, you would have five millions, or not quite, I think, of Canadians, and I think you would have sixty millions of the population of the United States on the south. What have these people done? The sixty millions of the population of the United States have built up a wall the whole length of this 3000 miles, not of bricks or of stone, but of Acts of Congress, and they call it by the general name of ‘ tariff ’ ; and, on the other side, the five millions of Canadians have built a wall, also of the same length and pretty nearly of the same height, and they call that also ‘ tariff.’ But these walls are there for the purpose of intercepting commerce between the sixty millions on the south and the five millions on the north. And the five millions on the north have done another thing. They have turned a corner and run their tariff wall on the eastern coast of the continent northward, and thus have done their best also to a large extent to shut out commerce with the mother country. Now I think that is a fair statement of the unwisdom of our kinsmen on the other side of the Atlantic. But this system—as systems so stupid and foolish generally do—fails to give satisfaction to the northern side of the country. The Canadians complain that they are shut out from free commerce with the millions of their neighbours in the south, and of course some persons in the south complain that they are shut out by this barrier from the trade they might have with the millions of the Canadian population : and the Canadians say that their trade is blocked, that in point of fact they are very badly treated, and that they cannot buy things they would like to buy and cannot sell things they would like to sell. They can neither buy nor sell with freedom, and they are very greatly dissatisfied, and they wish those barriers to be thrown down. I think that is a very sensible wish, and I am perfectly certain that, whatever arrangements may be made, they will be thrown down. An old friend of mine, the late Edward Ellice, who was member for Coventry a great many years, had a property in Canada in the later years of his life. He paid a visit to the United States, and he went to look at his property, as was very natural, and when he came back, in talking to me about it, he entered into the subject of the possible connexion between the United States and Canada.

Speaking then of it as a political connexion that was possible at some future time, he said he was quite certain that if that connexion took place, and if Canada became a portion of the United States, his Canadian estate would immediately, or very soon, be doubled in value. He knew what he was talking about, and if it was true of his estate it would be true to some extent of perhaps hundreds and thousands of estates north of the tariff barrier. My opinion is, that if economical facts of that nature are so strong there will be a tendency—a tendency that can hardly be resisted—to get over the sentiment, however strong and however commendable, that it is better for the Canadians to be associated politically with Great Britain than associated politically with the American Union. This is a matter which is pressing on, because there is a large portion of the Canadian population—a considerable portion, at any rate—who believe themselves to be greatly injured by the commercial difficulties between them and their kinsmen in the United States ; and there are, I believe, more than a million of Canadians who have gone south and are living in the United States.

The consequence is that the pressing interest of the populations is such as to raise for discussion a question which, I say, may be one of considerable difficulty, but I hope it will be one that will not lead to any dangerous collision between the United States and this country. We have had some discussion lately, as you know, about what is called the Federation of the Empire. There is a member of the House of Peers—rather a lively and plucky nobleman, Lord Rosebery—who has been making speeches, interesting speeches, but the most interesting to me, and the longest one, is one on the reform of the House of Lords. Now, that speech, as I said, was a long one ; I think it was at least five columns. I read it with great interest. I think it was a speech of singular ability, and the only fault in it was this—that, however eloquent were its passages, when you came to examine it thoroughly you found that it led to nowhere. I spoke of him as a plucky nobleman. Well, he is a member of the order of the peerage for whom I have a great sympathy and a great respect. He has taken in hand what a contractor would call two very big jobs. One of them is the reform of the House of Lords, and the other is the Federation of the Empire. The question of the House of Lords is one upon which one might say a good deal, and, perhaps, one might say something quite as sensible as anything which was said by Lord Rosebery or any of the peers who spoke on that interesting question. But if you like we will leave the House of Lords for some other opportunity. The question will grow, and many opinions will be expressed, and possibly, though not certainly, within no unreasonable time some good result will come. But we will go, if you will allow me, to the question of the Federation of the Empire; and with regard to that I have read a great number of speeches upon it. I always read what people say upon the subject because I am one of those who think that the whole scheme or project is impossible and no better than a dream. Lord Rosebery—I don't know whether he meant to refer to me—spoke of those who treated the question as a dream and something not at all practical or practicable. We will see. Let us go back for a moment to a little over a hundred years ago—the year 1776, when the Declaration of American Independence was signed, or the year 1783, when the treaty between the revolted Colonies and this country was signed, and the independence of America was secured for ever. Let us go back to the time only ten years after that treaty was signed. What was the condition of this country? We were entering on a war, the greatest war the country was ever engaged in, one that caused the slaughter of more men, and a waste of more treasure than any other war this country was ever engaged in, the great war with the French Republic and the French Empire, and that war lasted with scarcely an intermission—I think of only a few months—for more than twenty years. Now, suppose that the American Colonies had not revolted, or suppose our stupid fathers at the time had conquered them and subjected them, what would have been the result? Why, as a matter of course, the American Colonies would have been involved in the twenty years' war in which this country was involved. I think it was much better that they were attending quietly to their own business and going on in their own way. Therefore it would have been an enormous calamity for the Colonies of the United States—for the thirteen revolted Colonies—if they had continued connected with this country, liable to all the calamities of that frightful war which for more than twenty years not only ravaged great portions of Europe, but subjected the population of this country to the calamities, miseries, and sufferings which no historian has attempted to describe, nor can any of us with the greatest power of imagination in the least degree picture to ourselves. Unfortunately for us, our war policy is not abandoned. We are always getting into some mischief, and I am sorry to say that, apparently, it does not matter in the least which party is in power. I would not give two pins to choose between one great political leader and another, or between one party and another in the House of Commons. We have had, you know, only very lately the war in the Soudan. We had only three years ago a condition of things when from day to day it was expected that war would commence between this country and the great Empire of Russia. You recollect a solemn speech—I do very well—a solemn speech of Mr. Gladstone's. Borne down apparently as it were by the consciousness of the peril that was impending, he asked Parliament to grant eleven millions of money—

I think that was the vote. What did they do with it? They engaged ships and spent the money somehow; I do not think anybody can very well tell how it was spent; but we know it came out of the pockets of the taxpayers, and they never got any of it back again. Well, what happened? This is what happened—war was not declared, but the pressure was such that it was suggested that rather than go to war—we had had one great war in our time with Russia—why not try some mode of arbitration? People said—the London correspondents of newspapers, all those people who imagined facts or made them, said, Why cannot you get the King of Denmark to arbitrate, or why cannot you get the President of the United States, somebody, anybody to arbitrate? Well, nobody was more anxious to arbitrate than Mr. Gladstone. I do not suppose he is more in favour of war than any reasonable person. When it was announced, somehow arbitration was proposed, and accepted, and likely to take place; but when they came to attempt something of arbitration they discovered there was nothing to arbitrate about. Well, there was nothing more certain than that there was nothing to arbitrate on. We are landed in enormous difficulties by servants who ought never to have been trusted on the Afghan frontier, and we have been plunged into all the wars of my time by servants whom the Government have employed and who seem to have been utterly unworthy of the confidence that was reposed in them. I should like to ask the federation people whether the Colonies of this country, Canada and the many Colonies, the great Colonies that cluster in the South Pacific, the Australian Colonies, whether they find that these Colonists will be willing to bind themselves to the stupid foreign policy of war. Will they be willing to undertake the responsibility of entering into wars the seat of which is 10,000 miles away, and in which they cannot have the slightest interest, and when they may not have been in the least consulted as to the cause of quarrel which this country was rushing into? In my opinion the Colonies will never stand it. If I were a Canadian, or Victorian, or New South Wales man, or Queenslander, or New Zealander, I would take good care, as far as I was concerned, that my voice should never go in favour of the policy of the old country as far as that was concerned. It would be much better for humanity and for us that these Colonies should be under governments of their own and independent, and should not enter into quarrels in which they were not concerned, but endeavour to maintain their own honour and not take part in the miserable quarrels, contests, and wars which for a long time past have disfigured the history of the kingdom in which we live.

Having referred to the difficulties which the system of tariffs existing in the Colonies was calculated to throw in the way of federation, he continued:

On these two questions I should rely: on the question of the tariffs, which divide the Colonies among themselves and divide them from us, and on the question of our foreign policy, which tends to place the Colonies all over the world in a situation of peril, because of the uncertainty of the peace which we are able to maintain—on these two grounds I think it is quite hopeless to expect there should be federation between our wide Colonies and their vast populations, and the people and the Government of this country. I feel the whole thing is a dream and an absurdity; but it does not follow that you may not do a great many things by binding the Colonies to us and creating a perpetual friendship, I hope, between them and the mother country. Now, what can one say of the future of our race and of our kinsmen? Is that merely a dream? By no means. I, who have no belief in this scheme of federation, have the greatest possible belief in the future of those Colonies; also, I hope, there will be strengthened amicable relations with this country. Look where we are now. We have in this country—we are nearing, at any rate in the United Kingdom—a population of forty millions. Now, I think, there are thirty-six millions, but probably by the end of the century, which is not far off, it will be forty millions. In Canada and Australia there are, I think, at least ten millions, or probably more than ten millions, of what we call our kinsmen and fellow-subjects; but in the United States at this moment there are sixty millions of population, which by the end of this century, in all probability, will reach 100 millions. Of these 100 millions, I suppose three-fourths are persons of our own blood, and derived from ancestors and families of the United Kingdom. We have—as Mr. Chamberlain has told you—nobody who can discuss any of these points between the two countries without referring to the fact, the gratifying and astonishing fact, that we have, with all these 150 millions that I am speaking of—and I am not saying anything of the people in the West Indies, or in the Cape of Good Hope, or in the vast spread of the English language in the English Empire in India; but in this country and in Canada and in the United States there are, or soon will be, 150 millions of population, nearly all of whom owe their birth and origin to the comparatively small country in which we live. It is a fact that is not paralleled in any past history, and what may come in the future to compare with it or excel it, it is not for us to speak of, or even with any show of reason to imagine; but we have in all these millions the same language, the same literature, mainly the same laws and the institutions of freedom. May we not hope for the highest and noblest federation to be established among us? That is a question to which I would ask your special and sympathetic attention. The noblest kind of federation among us, under different Governments it may be, but united by race, by sympathy, by freedom of industry, by communion of interests and by a perpetual peace, we may help to lead the world to that better time which we long for and which we believe in, though it may not be permitted to our mortal eyes to behold it.

Bright was not well when he made this speech. He had been poorly during the previous winter, and though better in March 1888, had not completely recovered. In May he fell ill again, and never, I believe, after that time left One Ash. In June he rallied, and in July and August continued slightly to improve. During the summer he spent some time every fine day in the garden at One Ash, took an interest in public affairs, watched the proceedings of the Parnell Commission with special attention, and, tenderly cared for by his children, bore his indisposition with resignation and fortitude. During his illness, he was interested in the Shakespeare-Bacon controversy, which had been revived by the publication of Mr. Donnelly's book in 1888. Among the books read to him, at the time, was 'The Life of Thomas Drummond'—a man whose character resembled his own in fearless love of justice, and in warm sympathy with the poor and the oppressed.

In October, he had a serious relapse, and suffered from congestion of the lungs and diabetes. After a slight rally he became worse in December, and took to his bed. He never left his room afterwards.

Between December, and March 1889 his condition varied, but the tendency of his malady was to get worse. In March 1889 he became very ill. He was very patient, talked cheerfully to the members of his family, as they came to him, and quite realised that the end was approaching. On Tuesday, the 26th, his mind began to wander, and he never quite regained consciousness afterwards. Members of his family sat up with him throughout the night, and on Wednesday morning, the 27th, at 8 A.M., he passed peacefully away.

Bright rests in the Friends' Burial Ground, Rochdale. His grave bears the simple inscription—

JOHN BRIGHT
Born November 16th, 1811
Died March 27th, 1889

He will live in the memory of his fellow-countrymen as the greatest moral force which appeared in English politics during his generation.

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